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Dance and Dancers

OCTOBER 1960

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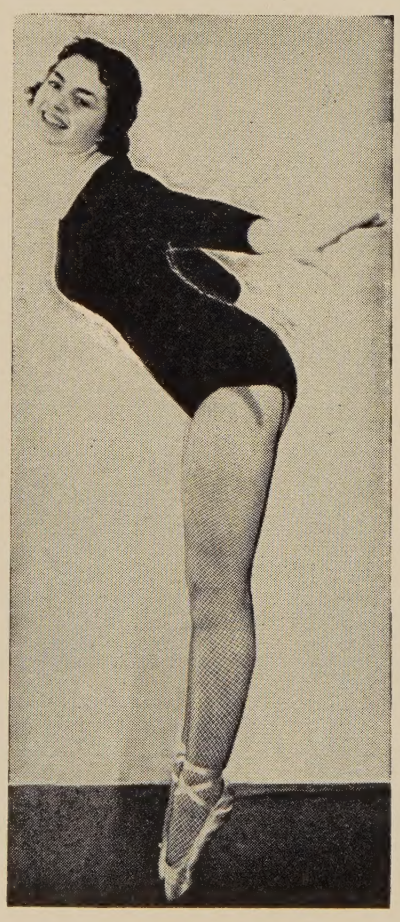

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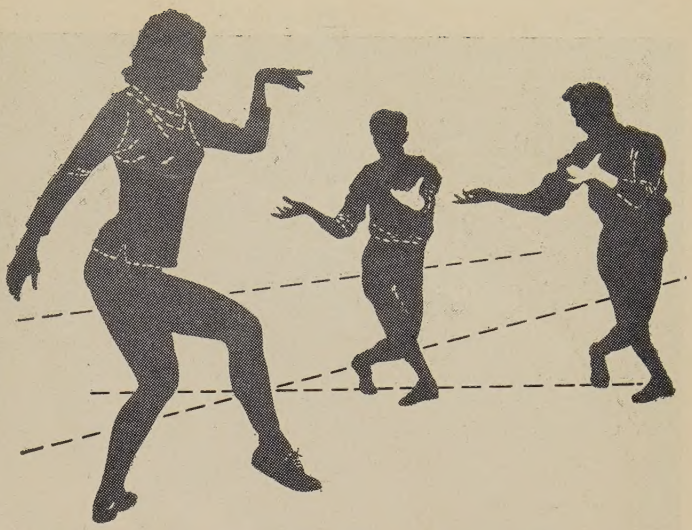

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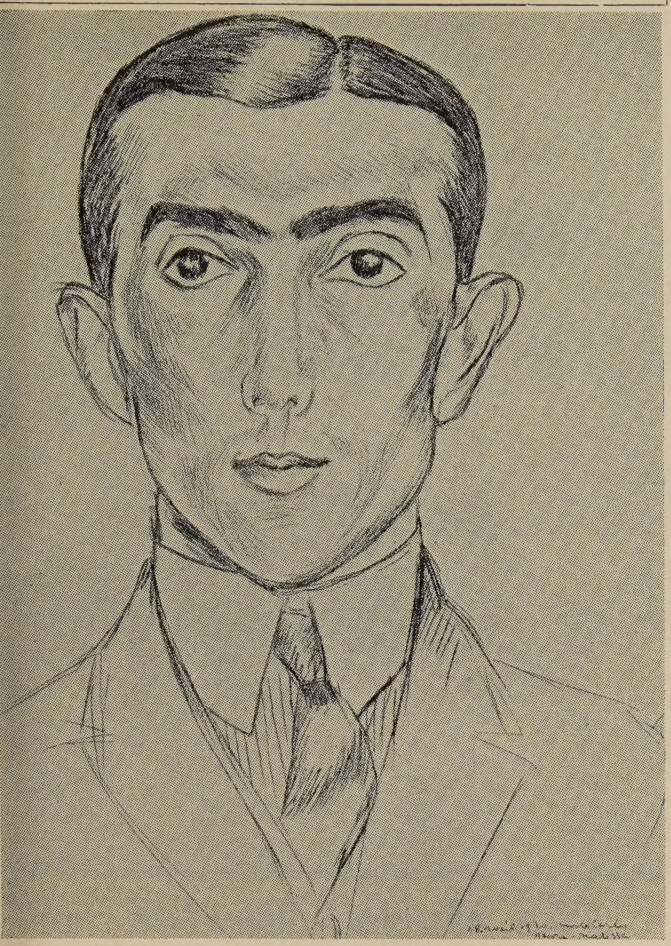
Personality of the Month



Drawing by HENRI MATISSE, Monte Carlo, 1920.

LEONIDE MASSINE

IT is over forty years ago since Leonide Massine made his début in Britain as a dancer, and those years have been packed with achievement. Now, at the age of 66, he has just started a new ballet company, and by the time these words appear it will have been seen at the Edinburgh Festival and it will be possible to make some assessment of this latest development in his ever-remarkable career. The company, which was formed at the request of the Festival authorities in the Italian town of Nervi this summer, is one of the largest Massine has ever worked with. As both Artistic Director and principal choreographer, he has had a free hand in the formulating of its policy, and has not only chosen to revive such works from the past as *Le Beau Danube* and that once controversial "symphonic ballet" *Choreartium*, but has also undertaken for the first time two full-evening ballets — *Commedia Umana*, based on Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and a complete ballet version, although including off-stage singers, of Rossini's opera *The Barber of Seville*.

Such vitality seems natural in a man who has already had what are virtually two distinct careers as a choreographer — the first for Diaghilev (who originally discovered and nurtured his talents) and a second for the various Ballets Russes groups of between the wars, where he first developed his ideas on the "symphonic ballets" that in their time exercised a profound influence on the ballet of their day.

During the past decade his reputation as a choreographer has suffered a decline, and he is now possibly no longer bracketed with Ashton and Balanchine as among the very top contemporary choreographers. But few men have given to the world more ballets of such enduring quality, and Massine's work, particularly his *demi-caractère* ballets of the Diaghilev vintage, must surely be regarded as a permanent addition to the small store of ballet classics. It is a regrettable fact that nowadays these works are beginning to drop out of the ballet repertories of the world (the Royal Ballet for example is currently preserving only his minor *Mam'zelle Angot*), and if his new company can help preserve them, it will be accomplishing a valuable task.

OCTOBER 1960 11th YEAR OF PUBLICATION Vol. 11 No. 10

Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS *Associate Editor:* CLIVE BARNES
Assistant Editor: E. C. Mason.
WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

The Gang Busters?

EVERYONE admires a plucky fighter, so we all felt a good deal of sympathy for the management of that dancing extravaganza *The Princess* who, after having received a unanimously unfavourable first night press, gave away free all the seats at the Strand Theatre during a whole week. In this way they hoped to get an audience who, in its turn, would then attract a paying audience later. It was a novel, bold, expansive though expensive gesture.

Unfortunately this generosity was offset by the suggestion that the critics had ganged-up on the show and that anyway the public were far better critics which it was hoped would be proved by the remarks sent in on slips of paper dished out to members of the "free" audience. It was also another contention of the management that anyway the show was not for the critics or for those who know about ballet but was aimed at an imaginary Mr. and Mrs. Jones and their children who would thus be brought into ballet for the first time — the easy way.

Now we have had visiting companies before this new one from Florida, who, when they were none too well received, blamed it on the critics. In actual fact, anyone who regularly reads a good deal of criticism on any subject will know how widely views vary from one reviewer to another. When they are unanimous, as they were in this case, it proves only that the faults or virtues of the subject under discussion are so glaring that no room is left for dispute.

It also shows a lack of understanding of the British to think that in this day and age there are any imaginary Mr. and Mrs. Joneses who can possibly be brought to ballet in this way. After all, television is now the visual art which reaches the greatest number of people and ballet, good ballet, has captured nearly all the hangers-back through this medium. And once having been brought to the doors of a theatre then there is nothing much wrong with *The Sleeping Beauty* or *Swan Lake* as an introduction to ballet and these can easily be seen in England. In Palm Beach, where *The Princess* was first shown, I can imagine that the situation might be different.

It would save a lot of trouble in the long run if all companies visiting another country — this equally applies to British companies going abroad — made a very careful study of what the country to be visited really liked and then cut their coat according to the cloth that they find. A great deal of strained relationship could thus be avoided.

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INSPIRATION: Sekh, as Paganini, with Kondratieva, as his Muse, in a scene from Lavrovsky's Paganini *at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.* *Photo: B. Ryabinin.*

Lavrovsky's *Paganini* may start new trend in Soviet Ballet

by NATALIA RENE

The repertories of most ballet companies in Soviet Russia have, up to now, consisted mainly of full-evening works. But with the success of Lavrovsky's production of Rachmaninoff's *Paganini* at the Bolshoi Theatre, it is possible that in future Russian audiences may see more one act ballets.

LAVROVSKY'S *Paganini* to Serge Rachmaninoff's famous *Rhapsody on a theme by Paganini* was premièred at the Bolshoi on April 7, 1960. Since this ballet is the first attempt at choreographing *Paganini* after Fokine's death in 1942, it is an event in the history of contemporary ballet for that fact alone. But Lavrovsky's creation deserves close attention and will doubtless become a lasting work because of its many outstanding merits.

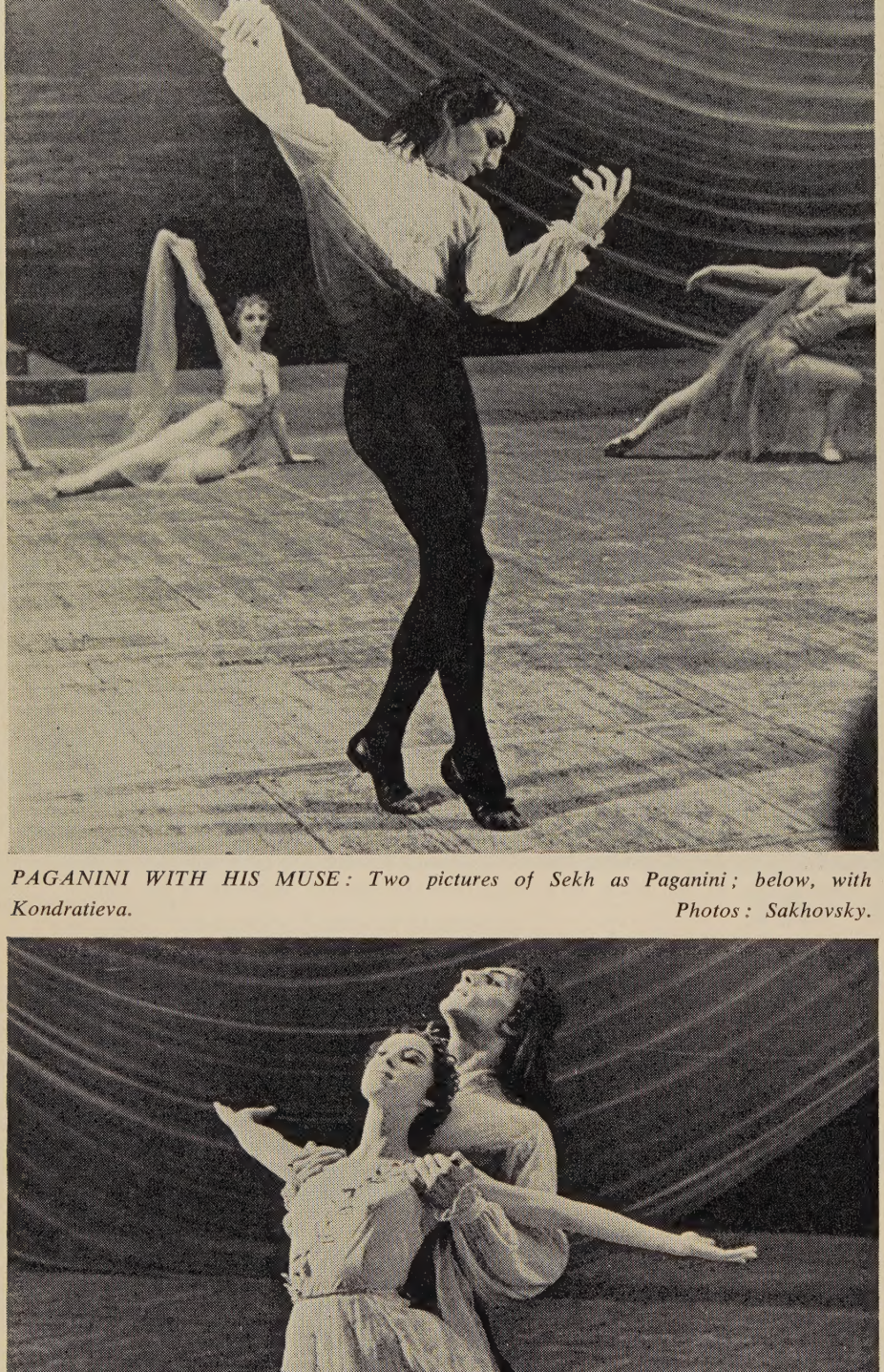
First and foremost it is very *musical* in the sense that it conveys most admirably the emotional qualities of Rachmaninoff's score. Paganini's theme, chosen by Rachmaninoff for his famous piece, is the last from "Ventiquattro capricci per violin solo", opus 1, for which the great violinist composed eleven variations and the finale. Rachmaninoff's 24 variations, brilliantly expressive and abundant with a great variety of rhythms, seemed to be naturally intended for choreographic evocation.

The Rhapsody, composed in 1934, attracted Fokine's attention. The choreographer was dreaming of a ballet to this music for a long time, but had difficulty in finding an appropriate subject, sufficiently original and capable of inspiring both himself and the composer. To this end Fokine and Rachmaninoff met several times at the composer's villa in Switzerland, where Fokine in August 1937 listened to the Rhapsody played by the composer. An exchange of letters ensued, as a result of which Rachmaninoff sent Fokine a detailed plan of a "book" for the ballet, indicating even the numbers of the variations in connection with different phases of development of the action.

By 1939 the ballet had taken a quite clear form in the choreographer's inspirations and he actually started working on the choreography while de Basil's company was touring Australia and New Zealand. The première, as is well known, took place in London at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on June 30, 1939. Rachmaninoff was prevented by sickness from attending the first night of his ballet presented by "Educational Ballets" (temporary title of de Basil's company) and the piano solo was played by a British pianist, Eric Harrison. War followed very soon, de Basil and his company left for America, and *Paganini* went into oblivion, to be revived in 1947 during the short post-war season of the de Basil company, never to be quite the same again.

Leonid Lavrovsky, unfamiliar with the Fokine production, had been much interested in the character of Paganini for a number of years, having read the reminiscences of Paganini's contemporaries and biographies of him (there is an excellent book on Paganini by Soviet author Anatoly Vinogradov). In the summer of 1959 Lavrovsky purchased a record of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a theme by Paganini* when the Bolshoi Ballet was touring the United States. As he listened to the music, deeply moved, Lavrovsky repeatedly found that he was not only listening but actually visualising the music, giving it a choreographic form in his mind.

Finally he read the Fokine-Rachmaninoff



PAGANINI WITH HIS MUSE: Two pictures of Sekh as Paganini; below, with Kondratieva. *Photos: Sakhovsky.*

letters to be found in the two volumes o Rachmaninoff correspondence published i Moscow by the Music Publishing Hous (In English these letters may be found i *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Musi* By Sergei Bertenson and Jay Leyda. Ne York University Press, 1956.) But he wa not inspired by the "book" of the first pr duction and decided to create his ow version. "Despite all my respect for Fokine talent," said Lavrovsky, "I did not consid it proper and interesting to depict Paganin merely as a tortured soul who sells himse to the 'evil spirit' for perfection in ar This resurrected the naïve old legen about the violin virtuoso without revealin his personality as an artist and witho showing the greatness of the soul of th brilliant musician and outstanding man wh had known the tremendous joy of creatio and no less sorrow from attacks by h numerous enemies, from hatred and pe secution by the catholic church. My ide was to show the main aspect of Paganini character — as a creator, fired with inspir tion; a Paganini courageously fighting f his art; a Paganini eternally in love n only with music, but with life whic engenders it. Such a solution, said th choreographer, arose from the Rhapsod itself — valiant, expressive, full of admir tion for Paganini's love of life."

In accordance with this idea of th "book" Lavrovsky divided it into seve episodes: 1. The first improvisations. Enemies. 3. An encounter. 4. Solitude an despair. 5. Love and consolation. 6. Jo of creation. Death. 7. Finale. Art stronger than death.

The "book" does not attempt to depi any actual episodes in the violinist's lif It sooner aspires to convey an impressio of the emotional conflicts which trouble him, of the moments of great inspiration which he was given, of the bigotry an persecution to which he was subjected b the catholic church, and of the victory creative art over all the obstacles.

The *Dies Irae* themes, occupying a co siderable portion of Rachmaninoff's Rha sody, since the composer quoted that hym in full with different variations, are no allotted not to "evil spirits" as in the Rac maninoff-Fokine version, but to the catho church, symbolised by sinister black figur in hooded cloaks, carrying black chandelie and by a distant figure of a bishop, dress in a scarlet robe and ominously guidi Paganini's enemies.

The adagio part (variations 11 throu 18) is given over to Paganini's visions his Muse, who at times takes the form his Beloved. Contrary to the Fokine pr duction, the music of the adagio is n played again at the end of the ballet.

The ballet starts in complete silence. T curtain is raised to show on the darken stage a fleeting passage of light clouds. Th creates an atmosphere of tension, and on after that the rendering of the Rhapsody started by Bolshoi pianist Irina Zaitse and the orchestra conducted by E. Sve lanov. More light gradually fills the sta to reveal a very laconic décor by Vadi Ryndin. It actually consists of large tran lucent grey-blue draperies and most of th scenic effects are produced by the play light and shadow brilliantly conceived b the artist and the choreographer. In ha mony with this kind of décor Lavrovsk has decided to do without any stage prop He says: "I was particularly struck by o sentence from Rachmaninoff's letter

TORMENT: Paganini (Sekh on floor) is persecuted by the church, symbolised by black figures, and his enemies dressed in an imitation of his own costume and who pierce him with their violin bows. *Photo: B. Ryabinin.*

Fokine in which he said that it would be good to see Paganini with a violin, but not in a realistic way — it should be something imaginary, something in the realm of fantasy. It seemed to me that the imaginary violin had to be suggested not only by the hands, the fingers, and the inspired face of the dancer who would appear as Paganini, but by his entire body." In accordance with this conception Lavrovsky choreographed movements for Paganini suggestive of a violin in his hands, while the dance to the main Paganini theme, with which Paganini commences the ballet, is full of staccato-like movements *(brisés)* in harmony with the scherzo quality of the variation.

After this first dance, in which Paganini seems to be possessed by a desire to play, follow scenes when he sees in the mist his own corpse, carried high on the lifted arms of enemies, who later, dressed in red-black costumes imitating that of his own, pierce him with violin bows. There is a brief and beautiful interlude of encounter with his Muse and his Beloved (both are admirably, though in a very remote and cold way, danced by Marina Kondratieva), then, after repeated persecutions by his enemies, Paganini remains alone with his creations and his Muse. The ballet ends as Paganini stands on the apron of the stage in a pose speaking of great inspiration.

Thus Paganini the creator is contrasted to the forces that persecuted him, and the ballet ends in a victory of Paganini's genius over death and evil. According to Lavrovsky he found this idea in the music, and the choreography, one must say, is in perfect harmony with the score. It only remains to desire for a greater feeling of unrest in the choreographic portrait of Paganini, a feeling of an almost daemonic possession by an urge for creation, which is definitely present in the music.

It is possible that these qualities will be still brought out by Yaroslav Sekh, a very gifted young dancer. So far he has not completely blended the difficult technical part of the role with the exacting demands of his acting abilities. He will still have to concentrate on the mime, particularly since it is very hard to establish where it begins and dancing ceases in Lavrovsky's choreography. However, it should be said in full justice that Sekh dances beautifully and at times conveys an impression of exalted ecstasy.

The *corps de ballet* in *Paganini* is small and takes an active part in the emotional development of the undercurrent of action. For the Muse's attendants Lavrovsky has created interesting dance patterns, now assembling the dancers in a sculptured group, radiating translucent light, and then scattering them all over the stage in interesting poses.

The new ballet is a welcome addition to the yet small repertoire of one-act ballets at the Bolshoi. Moreover, it is a demonstration of the possibility of a new reading of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody as a life-asserting work, speaking of Paganini the genius, whose art will live for ever.

We understand that Lavrovsky, very much taken up by Rachmaninoff's music, is turning over in his mind an idea of a ballet to the composer's "Symphonic Dances" — never yet given a choreographic form.

COVER STORIES

This month's front cover, by Dominic, is of Lynn Seymour and Desmond Doyle, of the Royal Ballet's touring section, in Le Lac des Cygnes **Act 3.**

SEYMOUR was born in Wainwright, Alberta, in 1939. Her first studies were with Jean Jepson and Nicholai Svetlanov in Vancouver. In 1953 she auditioned for Frederick Ashton and Ailne Philips when the Royal Ballet was in Canada and was accepted by the Royal Ballet School. After two years she joined the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet and then, in 1957, the Royal Ballet's touring company. She became a soloist in the following year and has risen rapidly to take over all principal rôles in the classics as well as having rôles created for her. She also appears with the main company at Covent Garden and is considered to be one of the most promising young dancers of the company.

DOYLE was born in Cape Town in 1932. He studied with Dulcie Howes and became a member of the Cape Town University Ballet in 1946. Came to England and joined the Royal Ballet in 1951, becoming a soloist in 1953. He dances most of the principal male rôles and is at the moment a leading dancer with the Royal Ballet's touring section.

FINALE: The three couples — Emblen and Burr (left), Wright and Gilpin (centre) and Ferri and Skouratoff (right)—with the full corps de ballet *in the final moment of Festival Ballet's production of Balanchine's* Bourrée Fantasque. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*

Bourrée Fantasque

First given by London's Festival Ballet at the Royal Festival Hall, London, on August 18, 1960. Music by Emmanuel Chabrier. Choreography by George Balanchine, reproduced by Una Kai. Costumes after Karinska.

Bourrée Fantasque ..... MARILYN BURR, RONALD EMBLEN
Wendy Barry, Pixie Bevan, Gaye Fulton, Sally Judd, Vicki Karras, Janet Kedge, Joan Potter, Angela Symonds, Ivan Baptie, Desmond Kelly, Barry McGrath, Ben Stevenson

Prélude ..... BELINDA WRIGHT, JOHN GILPIN
Pamela Hart, Anne Rowse, Gillian Bosworth, Roslyn Curtis, Gail Donaldson, Susan Winterton

Fête Polonaise ..... OLGA FERRI, VLADIMIR SKOURATOFF
Jennifer Alderton, Jill Bathhurst, Ivan Baptie, Ben Stevenson, Mary Coulson, Dianne Elesmore, Christine Jope, Vicki Karras, Janet Kedge, Sheila Melvin, Hendrik Davel, Desmond Kelly, Gale Law, Barry McGrath, Alan Woodard

CHOREOGRAPHY

IT is a lamentable — no, it is a disgraceful fact that during the past eight years we in London have only seen a total of three Balanchine ballets and a *pas de trois*. Nothing hints more clearly at the ballet backwater in which we live, and equally it would be difficult to find any circumstance more indicative of the lack of enterprise all too often found in British ballet. Nearly every other country in Europe is on the New York City Ballet's visiting list, and in addition many of Europe's own companies both large and small, include Balanchine ballets in their general repertory. The Royal Ballet, it is true, did make a civil nod in the direction of Balanchine ten years ago, when it produced in quick succession *Ballet Imperial* and the understandably short-lived *Trumpet Concerto*. Since then not a single British company has found stage-room for a Balanchine ballet, at least not until London's Festival Ballet decided to take advantage of Balanchine generous "free-gift offer", and to produce *Bourrée Fantasque*. This offer, currently enriching a number of European ballet repertories, was made last year. Under it Balanchine gives a ballet free, with the company concerned being responsible merely for the capital outlay of its actual staging.

In accordance with Balanchine's usual practice, he sent one of his ballet-mistresses — in this case Una Kai — to mount the work and the result is a remarkably fair physical approximation of the original ballet. It is, and this must be firmly stated at the outset, a tremendous asset to the by no means strong repertory of Festival Ballet, and it is also a notable acquisition for British ballet. Having said that, it may perhaps be admitted that *Bourrée Fantasque* cannot be classed in the very first flight of Balanchine ballets. On the other hand, even second-flight Balanchine is more than moderately stunning!

The basic fault of *Bourrée Fantasque* is its lack of unity. The ballet's three movements are disconcertingly separate, tenuously linked by only the personal style of Chabrier's music. While such a range of moods would be perfectly acceptable in a musical suite, in the dramatic world of ballet they lead to a disjointed air of incoherence. Acquaintance with *Bourrée Fantasque* teaches one to treat it as three isolated fragments, each of great individual merit, yet even then (or perhaps as a consequence) the ballet misses the majestic sweep of such plotless masterpieces as *Symphony in C, Serenade* or even *Theme and Variations*. The first movement is a daring dance burlesque, in which Balanchine pokes urbane fun apparently at his own style of classic ballet.

It is gentle, affectionate and very funny. The humour is for the most part dead-pan slapstick, and one of the basic jokes is groups of dancers rushing through animated and genuinely brilliant *enchaînements* with blank expressionless faces. They look for all the world as if they are not quite sure why they are there. The other joke is a playful commentary on the classical *pas de deux*, as danced by a tall nonchalant girl waving a fan, supported by a short little eager-beaver, madly anxious to please.

There are, of course, many incidental jokes, most of them cocking a snook at various ballet conventions — such as the

leading couple doing a *pirouette à la seconde* with the travelling knee slightly bent and the foot extended at a comically aggressive right angle. Feet here cause quite a bit of merriment throughout, at one moment the four tailor-dummy cavaliers throw themselves on the ground to watch the girls' points with the detached interest of bug-hunting entomologists, and one of the best laughs of the ballet comes when the ballerina with queenly disdain gives her partner his come-uppance by unexpectedly clipping him behind the ear with her foot.

On the whole the humour is more grotesque than *fantasque,* but it has a marvellously enduring wit, a diamond-hard *New-Yorker* quality that adds weight and staying power to its zany slapstick. It is also astonishingly well choreographed, and the humour nearly always arises from the actual choreography — with its comic aberrations — rather than situation.

The second movement is a sweetly phrased essay in the art of conveying sentiment without being sentimental. In outline nothing could be much more sentimental than this *pas de deux,* with attendant nymphs, of boy and girl meeting, finding one another, losing one another and passing on. But anyone who has ever felt the poetry of a fugitive face ("if only I could meet you I could love you") can respond to the emotional overtones of this flowing, broken idyll.

One of Balanchine's special gifts is to point and highlight the classic dance vocabulary so that simple steps, such as the *arabesque,* become highly charged with a sort of dreamlike, almost impersonal emotion. Here he has his characters moving with fervent, trance-like anonymity in complicated patterns that unfold with convoluting ease. To be honest this movement, for all its poetry, is very nearly too much — that boy is so nearly too impossibly noble, that girl so dangerously approaching the unbelievably dreamy. Here Balanchine is flirting on the borderline of farce, but his sure craftsmanship and the gentle intricacy of his choreography never let him down.

The last movement, like the two preceding, is written for a ballerina, her partner and *corps de ballet,* but here in the *finale* Balanchine introduces the dancers from the other two movements, as in *Symphony in C* or *Western Symphony.* The mood of this movement is joyously athletic, there is an assertive, circus atmosphere to it, a brash, bouncy vigour that lifts the ballet up with an ever-mounting crescendo of dancing. Just as in the first movement Balanchine has concentrated on intricate point work, and in the second on *en terre* lyrical movement, so in the last he introduces a splendid variety of jumps. The movement is given a very fine sense of form and shape, both emotionally — so that climax is built on climax — and spatially, with Balanchine's circles, squares and diagonals producing a fantastic geometry of floor patterns. The moment towards the end when each of the three *corps de ballets,* led by their respective ballerinas, sweep diagonally across the stage in wide-arc'd jumps, each following the other in rapid succession from opposite corners, must surely be among the most exhilarating spectacles the ballet theatre has to offer.

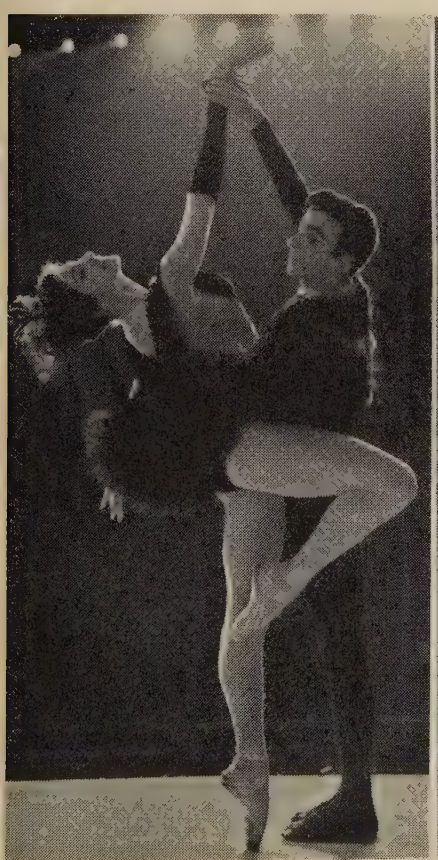
Una Kai's production is, so far as memory serves, exceptionally accurate in its detail. However, the rather unusual shape of the Festival Hall stage, which is unnaturally wide and shallow and has little wing space, has inevitably exerted a flattening effect upon Balanchine's circles. I think it is also a pity that Balanchine could not have been present at the final rehearsals of the production, as is his customary practice. I feel that his presence would have sharpened up the dance accents, and made what is a fair carbon copy into something much more like the original.

DANCING

AT the first performances of this production, the company did not dance it nearly so well as did the New York City Ballet in 1950 and 1952. This was hardly unexpected as after all Balanchine created the ballet on his own troupe and it is wonderfully well suited to their particular style of dancing and their particular physiques. All this is so self-evident that I would hardly think it worth stressing were it not for the fact that a number of my colleagues, possibly pleased to have something which they can whole-heartedly praise, have implied that *Bourrée Fantasque* has lost little or nothing in its translation from New York to London. In my view it has, at present, lost a great deal, though perhaps not irretrievably.

On the first night Marilyn Burr overguyed the opening movement with an almost brutal lack of sensitivity. In a rôle that depends for its effect upon a sophisticated, languid archness, her boisterous performance, though greatly to the taste of the audience, struck me as out of place. At later performances she had improved somewhat, but anyone fortunate enough to remember Tanaquil LeClercq, or even Diana Adams, in this part is not likely to

BOURREE FANTASQUE: *Marilyn Burr and Ronald Emblen in two moments from the opening section which gives the ballet its title. This movement is an ironic commentary on ballet elegance.* *Photo: Houston Rogers.*



PRELUDE: *Belinda Wright and John Gilpin in two moments from the middle section which uses the music for a lyric interlude from Chabrier's opera,* Gwendoline. *Photos: Houston Rogers.*

be overwhelmed. Her partner, Ronald Emblen, proved far better, and his harassed eagerness struck just the right note.

Olga Ferri was unable to measure up technically to the old Janet Reed rôle, and lacked elevation. She quite missed the crisp elegance the part needs, and gave a remarkably unexciting performance. Vladimir Skouratoff partnered well, although he was dancing in a somewhat semi-detached fashion.

The best performances unquestionably came from Belinda Wright in general and from John Gilpin in particular. Wright, who has recently acquired a somewhat ugly habit of grimacing in many of her ballets, danced this with an agreeable lack of affectation, and a good sense of underplayed drama. (It is a rôle easily overemphasised, as even that fine artist Nora Kaye once proved.) Gilpin, almost static for once, walked through his *pas de deux* magnificently. This is a rôle of difficult simplicity and he never put a foot wrong.

The *corps de ballet* had obviously been well schooled by Miss Kai and their ballet master Charles Dickson, and their precision was often admirable. As with the soloists, the men had the better of the day, the girls missing the greyhound refinement that Balanchine here so markedly exploits. Time and a certain judicious amount of recasting should work wonders with this production, particularly if the dancers remember the need to project their personalities less and polish up their musicality and dancing more. A very commendable start has, however, been made, and all the dancers must be applauded for the remarkable manner with which they coped with the difficulties of the Festival Hall stage.

Clive Barnes.

MUSIC

MUCH of the Chabrier music used by Balanchine for *Bourrée Fantasque* will already be familiar to those who know *Ballabile,* recently revived by the Royal Ballet. As with many composers during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Chabrier's music adapts itself well to choreographic purposes, since it provides distinctive rhythm and attractive colour without too much depth of feeling or personality to influence the choreographer's imagination too powerfully.

Chabrier was virtually self-taught in music, almost a "Sunday composer" holding down a clerical post at the Ministry of the Interior for 18 years of his career. He did, however, cultivate a passion for the arts much wider than music alone (it would be a salutary thing if more enthusiasts of all kinds today did likewise). Chabrier became an intimate friend of Verlaine, Manet and Anatole France, and on his death left a magnificent collection of 29 paintings by Renoir, Fantin-Latour, Sisley, Monet and Manet, including the last-named's famous *Bar aux Folies-Bergère.*

I mention this because his eye for visual harmony and colour clearly conditioned his approach to music. *Bourrée Fantasque,* Balanchine's title-piece and the music of the ballet's first movement, is "Impressionist" music reflecting in sound the style of contemporary French painting, though on a lower level of imagination than the best of the pictorial artists simply because Chabrier was a gifted but not outstanding talent. Nevertheless his rhapsody, *España,* his most pictorially "Impressionist" score, began the trend that Debussy and Ravel later developed in more sophisticated style.

The remaining two movements from the ballet are set to music from Chabrier's operas *Gwendoline* and *Le Roi malgré lui* that reveal his other strong influence: an enthusiasm for Wagner. As chorus-master for the Concerts Lamoureux in Paris from 1881, Chabrier was actively involved with rehearsals for *Tristan und Isolde,* and the lyrical *Gwendoline* music in the ballet's second movement fairly drips with Wagnerian cadences, timbres and harmony. Chabrier was more true to his own instinctive feeling for vivacity and humour in much of *Le Roi malgré lui,* and the *Fête polonaise* from the opera provides *Bourrée Fantasque* with an effectively brilliant finale.

Balanchine, whose musical understanding surpasses that of most other living choreographers, has matched his invention to the music with sure instinct, recognizing that the score has no pretensions to "symphonic" scale and styling his ballet accordingly. It now remains for Geoffrey Corbett to match his conducting to the joint requirements of Balanchine-Chabrier.

At the first performance the London Philharmonic Orchestra played the *Bourrée* with a sprightlier attack than they usually produce on their ballet assignment, but rhythmic changes were liable just to happen instead of being securely pointed. The clarinet solo in the *Gwendoline* interlude could have been phrased more elegantly, and in the finale the strings sounded too starved of tone to cover the "oom-pah" support (perhaps because there were too few of them), while the rhythm was stressed over-loudly and not sufficiently liltingly. The company does not possess so many ballets of this calibre that they can afford to overlook musical details which contribute vitally to the impact of the whole.

Noël Goodwin.

DECOR

SOME years ago, when I was more actively connected with the designing of ballets than I have been over the past ten years owing to what are sometimes called "other commitments", I gave a great deal of thought to the designing of symphonic or plotless ballets. At that time I had only seen the Massine works in this particular idiom and the only designing for them that really satisfied me was what Bérard did for Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique.* Even when I think of this now I get shivers down my spine at its overwhelming splendour. But really that ballet hardly comes under this category because Berlioz laid down a very decided plot which Massine respected in his choreography. No, the ones that I found distracting were *Les Présages* and *Choreartium.* Admiring André Masson as I do when he paints, I just felt that his décor and costumes for the former were too over-

whelming both in colour and design. I began to get the feeling that any transmutation of a symphonic work into choreography and movement was something that should be so complete that the personality of the designer must be ultimately subjugated almost to the point of non-existence. Mind you, I think that this is the *only* form of ballet in which the art of the designer should be so muted.

Feeling this very strongly, I started to work on a system for this type of work in which there should barely be any scenery (just a cyclorama, sky-cloth or plain drapes), starkly simple costumes which in no way cluttered the line of the dancer — and lighting. I suppose at the time I must have been greatly under the influence of Adolphe Appia, whose theories on lighting and its relation to music I had then discovered — very late in the day I may say. It seemed to me that what this great man had done for Wagner operas could also be applied to ballet, though in actual fact he did work for dancers with Jacques Dalcroze. I began to realise that light could be as eloquent as paint — it could be splendid, it could be tragic, it could be gay, sentimental, nostalgic — it could be anything. At the same time it had to light the dancers, give them roundness and another dimension. I had got tired of seeing dancers in the flat and just looking like a part of the scenery. After all they are living creatures and dance is a living art.

Not long after the war I had the chance of putting my theories into practice, though admittedly in a very simplified form, when I designed John Taras's *Designs with Strings* for Metropolitan Ballet. I think that it was the first time that this kind of designing had been done for ballet in England and I knew nothing of what was happening in America, for at that period we had only had the first season of their Ballet Theatre. It was therefore a bit of a shock when New York City Ballet later gave their first season at Covent Garden to find that all the ideas I had lovingly nursed for so many years had been fairly common practice with Balanchine's companies for quite a time. This was also my first introduction to the work of the person I now admire most in ballet design — though perhaps "clarification" would be a better word — that grand mistress of light, Jean Rosenthal.

At this point it is necessary to hark back for a few moments to the bad old days of the then youthful *Dance and Dancers*. If I remember rightly I was not quite so enthusiastic about this form of ballet presentation as I think I should have been. It was not a question of sour grapes, nor was it anything to do with Jean Rosenthal, whom I worshipped from the word go, but I just felt that much as I admired these works we were being shown too much of the same thing all in one evening and the theatrical impact was lost owing to satiety. One ballet of this kind would have been sensational, three or four against no-scenery became a bit tedious. I have always been sorry that many people, including Mr. Balanchine, misconstrued my remarks about all this. Today, after nearly a decade of seeing fantastically bad décors, with but a very few notable exceptions, I should welcome weeks of no-scenery ballets from the New York City Company.

One of the works given during that first season was *Bourrée Fantasque*, and probably I was not very nice about the designing of this either. So when I trudged to Festival Hall for the opening night of the present revival, I began to wonder how my attitude would have changed over the intervening years. Well it *has* changed (but then so has Balanchine's, because he now presents ballets with loads of scenery), because I thought it looked one of the most coolly elegant ballets I have seen in a long while. But then its place was rather different because instead of being preceded by several works against sky-cloths and drapes we had, in this particular programme, some rather tired-looking designs by Osbert Lancaster for *Napoli* which apart from a few costumes evoked Naples not one whit, and then some of those stylised teen-age beatnik costumes — *circa* a period before Jack Kerouac — designed by Tom Lingwood for *Symphony for Fun*. Compared to this, *Bourrée Fantasque* looked like the designing masterpiece it may always have been.

Of course there's very little that can be said about the designing of this sort of ballet provided it suitably reflects the mood of the music and choreography. Chabrier's music has a late 19th-century wit and elegance, Balanchine's choreography has the same. Therefore it remains for the designer, unnamed in the programme, to match-up to both these people. I don't know who was originally responsible for the décor — just white semi-transparent drapes against a dehydrated blue sky — but it is very clean and unfussy and somehow gives the work a feeling of suspension. I do know that Karinska originally designed the costumes and these look to me to be most faithful reproductions, so why not mention her name, because it is not every day that British companies get costumes by one who has done more than anybody to bring ballet costume-making to a high art. You may remember that the principal girls wear dull gold bodices with short black tutus, all the *corps de ballet* wear the same only with turquoise bodices, while in the middle section they wear black and white dresses of a "Sylphide" length. The boys are mainly in black apart from a panel of colour corresponding to that of the girls, and all wear black berets, worn only by John Gilpin with a real air.

Possibly the costumes are more chic than witty, but designing witty costumes is such a razor-edge feat — one topple from the upright and they can become clumsy and dull — that it was better to play safe. Anyway the real wit here is in the choreography, so the less one is distracted from that the better.

The lighting did not appear to be "after" Jean Rosenthal, but it was functional in that it was possible to see the dancers and it gave a feeling of diffused brilliance. Anyway, I very much doubt if even the physical presence of Jean Rosenthal could do much that was interesting with Festival Hall's peculiar stage — ingenious though it was to have created any semblance of a theatre in such a building.

Anyway, it was a real pleasure to welcome back this ballet and it was like a reunion with a friend who has been abroad for many years. And Festival Ballet must have discovered, as Clive Barnes predicted last month, that the public respond with far greater eagerness to a good work of this kind than they do to something like *Bonaparte à Nice (1796)*, and I very much doubt whether it cost any more.

Peter Williams.

FETE POLONAISE : *Olga Ferri and Vladimir Skouratoff in the final section of the ballet. This music comes from another Chabrier opera,* Le Roi Malgré Lui.
Photo : Houston Rogers.

SWAN LAKE: *The two principals in the National Theatre of Prague's production of Tchaikovsky's* Swan Lake. *Left, Olga Skálová as Odette. Right, Miroslav Kura as Prince Siegfried.*

Change and Growth in Czechoslovakia

by JAN REY **edited by BERNARD ORNA**

Ballet is an art that has been developing in many countries since the war in response to a new, and still growing, public interest. In certain of these countries ballet may indeed have been established before the war, but it has received greater attention and a fresh impetus in recent times.

Czechoslovakia is one such country. Ballet there possesses a certain tradition and on this foundation new work is being established. The loss in seven post-war years of three of the country's best choreographers has, however, dealt Czechoslovak ballet a serious blow and left a gap in continuity and inventiveness which is frankly recognized.

In the following articles Jan Rey, a leading critic and "librettist", outlines the history and present standing of his country's ballet and a visitor from abroad will comment on new Czechoslovak ballets and the standard of production and performance recently observed on the spot.

CZECHOSLOVAK ballet can claim no such tradition as ballet in Italy, for example, or France or Russia. It was not until the end of the last century that the Czechs built their own National Theatre in Prague, and the first ballet produced reflected the deterioration of ballet in Italy and France at that time. At the beginning of the 20th-century, Czechoslovak composers, particularly Oskar Nedbal, began to draw from national material, but the themes were mostly from fairy tales. So the fairy tale fantasy form of ballet-mime became the foundation of Czech ballet repertoire. The dancing rôles were filled by the small *corps de ballet*, while the mime rôles were played by members of the theatre's dramatic and operatic casts. As far as choreography and training goes, two ballet masters in particular distinguished themselves during this period: Augustin Berger (1861-1945), who studied in Italy, and the Italian who made Czechoslovakia his home, Achille Viscusi (1869-1945).

The period between the two world wars, when an independent Czechoslovakia re-emerged, saw the number of theatres increase and, with them, ballet *corps* performing mainly in opera productions but also appearing in their own programmes. A ballet repertoire appeared not only in the Prague theatres, but also in Plzen, Brno, Ostrava and Bratislava. The names of new Czechoslovak choreographers appeared too, Josef Judl, Emerich Gabzdyl and, in particular, those of three artists, all of whom died at an early age and whose aim had been to raise ballet in Czechoslovakia to the level of that in other European countries — Josef Jencík (1893-1945), Sasa Machov (1903-1951) and Ivo Vána Psotá (1908-1952), who acquired great experience with the Basle Ballet in Switzerland. Besides a choice from works by Tchaikovsky, Glazunov, Délibes and others, several selections from the repertoire of the Diaghilev Ballets (Stravinsky, Prokofiev, etc.) were produced on Czechoslovak stages. The influence of these productions made itself felt in the works of some Czechoslovak composers as well, especially that of Bohuslav Martinu. The technical standards of the dancers improved. Foremost there were the pupils of Psotá's ballet school who considerably raised the level of the Brno Ballet which he directed. At the same time, to the former influence of the Italian school of ballet was added that of the Russian school.

After the Second World War cultural life entered on a new period of development. Scores of new theatres were established and today there is not a region in Czechoslovakia, nor any of the larger towns, that does not have its own permanent theatre. Within this broad network of professional theatres, there are 12 ballet groups who regularly perform in ballets in addition to taking part in dances for operatic productions. Some of these groups are not large and total 20-25 dancers. The largest group, with over 100 members, belongs to the National Theatre in Prague, which presents opera as well as ballet at two of its three houses. Together with the dramatic and operatic casts *corps de ballet* also participate each year in the national competition entitled "Theatre Harvest", which affords an opportunity for a review and criticism of work. The winning productions are performed in Prague and groups, as well as individual artists, receive awards. In addition the government each year rewards outstanding artists with the title "State Prize-Winner" and a generous money prize; and several dancers have already been thus honoured.

In Czechoslovakia the ballet is generally attached to a permanent theatre which is State-supported. Some of the smaller companies, however, regularly go on tour to other towns in their region where there are theatres which otherwise put on only regular stage plays. This has made it possible for wider audiences to attend the performance of a ballet at least a few times every year. Although ballet alternates with plays and opera on the stages of the majority of theatres, independent ballet performances are given once and sometimes twice a week. Otherwise, the ballet companies are mostly engaged in the presentations of opera.

The ballet repertoire of the Czechoslovak theatre is reasonably full and varied.

Almost every theatre presents two new ballets each year and repeats performances as long as there is interest in the town or region, that is 25-30 times on the average. Usually a ballet remains in the repertoire as much as two seasons, after which it alternates with others. In big centres like Prague, Bratislava and Brno, the best and most popular ballets remain as part of the theatres' permanent repertoire and are repeated year after year.

Full-length ballets predominate in the repertoire of Czechoslovak theatres: an evening programme of two or three shorter ballets is less usual, for Czech and Slovak audiences seem to prefer full-length works. So-called "symphonic ballets", that is a symphonic work not specifically composed for ballet but having sufficient plot to be adapted, are not especially popular, and only Rimsky-Korsakov's *Schéhérazade* has been produced at a few theatres. The basic repertoire is made up of works which could be called the classical heritage. These are primarily Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty* and *Nutcracker Suite.* The first of these is the best-loved. It is closely followed by *Raymonda* by Glazunov and Délibes' *Coppélia.* Now and then, one sees on the stage productions of *Giselle* by Adam, *Don Juan* by Glück and Beethoven's *Prometheus.* Of the older Czechoslovak composers' works only Oskar Nedbal's maintain a place — his fairy-tale ballets, *The Story of Honza* and *From Fairy Tale to Fairy Tale,* are very popular among young audiences.

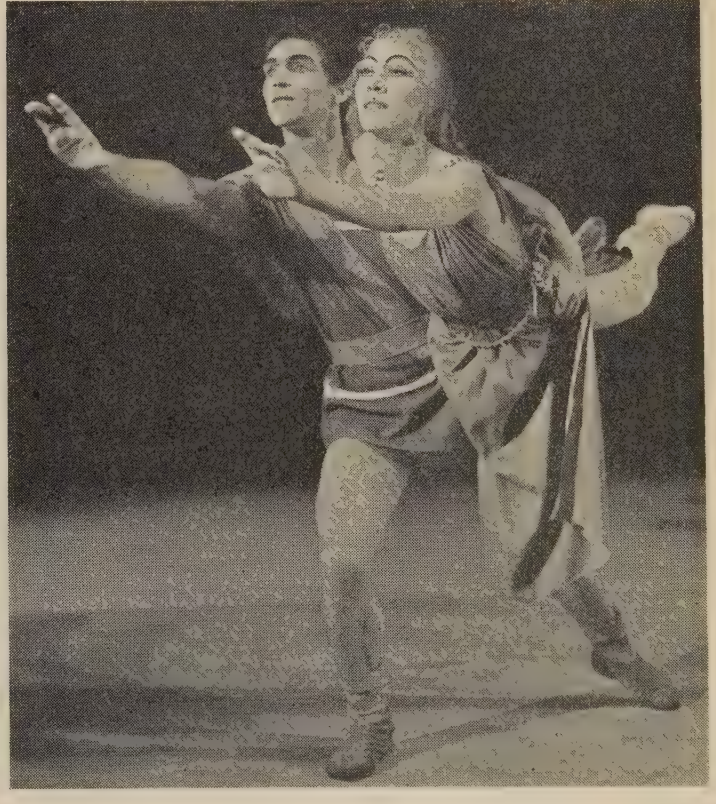
Ballets by Soviet composers are great favourites among the general public. In particular there are the works of Prokofiev, whose ballet *Romeo and Juliet* has been produced by six different theatres and whose fairy tale ballet *Cinderella* is also very popular. They are followed by two ballets by Asafiev, *Flames of Paris,* which takes the French Revolution as its theme, and *Bakhchisaray Fountain,* inspired by a theme of Pushkin's and produced already in nine theatres. Four companies have put on *Red Poppy* by Glière, while others have performed Khatchaturian's *Gayne,* Vasilenkov's *Mirandolina,* based on a Goldoni play, and Oransky's *Merry Wives of Windsor.* Khatchaturian's suite *Masquerade* is often part of ballet programmes. The realistic forms of Soviet ballet present a difficult but interesting task for choreographers and interpreters who, through their creative efforts, develop their expressiveness. Czechoslovak ballet some while ago gained direct experience of Soviet ballet from ballet master A. Tomsky, who, as guest choreographer at three theatres, directed Glière's *Red Poppy* in Bratislava, Asafiev's *Bakhchisaray Fountain* in Prague and Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* in Prague and Brno. The Bratislava ballet benefited similarly from the visit of a Hungarian guest choreographer, G. Harangozó, who directed the production of *The Kerchief* by the Hungarian composer Kenessey.

At the same time theatres are devoting special attention to the need for new Czechoslovak works, and new ballets are often composed at the suggestion of a theatre. During the past ten years or so Czech and Slovak composers have written scores for more than 20 ballets, about half of these full-length. Leading figures in ballet consider that without Czechoslovak works it is impossible to establish a real national ballet. The choice of themes has widened too. Many classics of Czech literature are adapted as ballet librettos. Thus the satirical poem by Karel Havlícek Borovsky about the long-eared, Midas-like King Lavra, became the basis for a ballet by Jaroslav Doubravy, a ballad of Karel Jaromír Erben provided the theme for Jan Novák's *The Wedding Shirt,* and an episode from the famous novel *Granny* by Bozena Nemcová inspired the ballet *Viktorka* by Zbynek Vostrák. Vostrák has further created *A Philosophical History,* on the life of students in the revolutionary year 1848, from the classic novel of the same title by Alois Jirásek, and a ballet whose theme is the famous fairy tale *Snow White.* Among other young Czech composers, Jan Hanus drew again on fairy tale material for his *Salt Above Gold* and Jarmil Burghauser for his merry fantasy *Honza and the Devil.* A rich tradition of folk heroes is revived in the ballets *Ondrás* (from Silesia) by Ilya Hurník and *Jánosík* (from Slovakia) by Václav Kaslík. Karel Horky has taken the folk stories of Moravia as the theme for his ballet *Jecmínek.*

Themes with settings that depict life in the mountains and the countryside have set choreographers and dancers a new task: to become acquainted with and master folk dances and seek, too, new means of expression for the presentation of the "heroes" and "heroines". It has been possible to draw upon the great legacy of folk dances which such composers as Bedrich Smetana, Antonín Dvorák and Leos Janácek used in their operas. The *Lassky Dances* suite by Janácek, which has been presented by many companies, afforded good groundwork in the approach to this aspect of ballet.

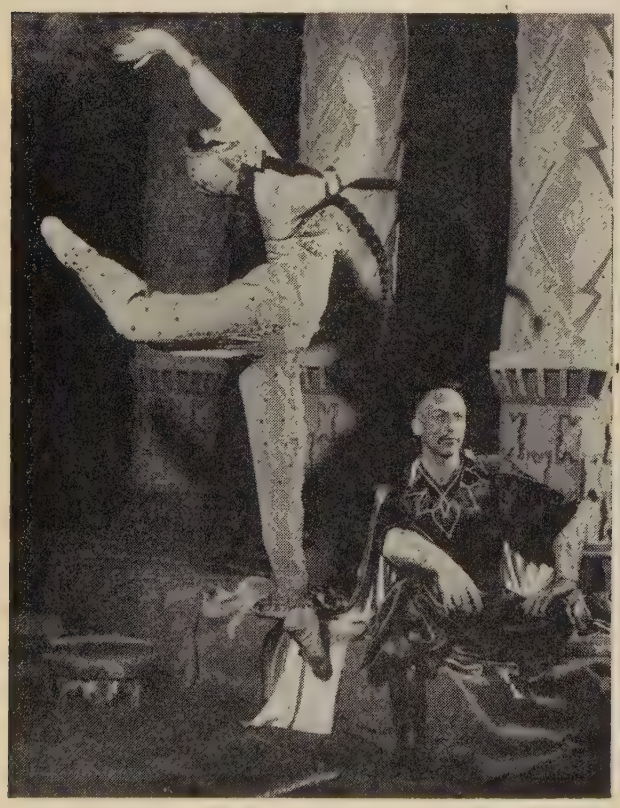
The question of the relationship between folk and classical dances is often discussed by Czechoslovak ballet people. It is generally felt that the new themes cannot be mastered merely through classical or character dance, which has been the rule until now. Many folk song and dance *ensembles,* from abroad as well as from Czechoslovakia itself, have uncovered for ballet artists a hitherto unknown world, as

FROM ANCIENT LEGEND: Left, Frantisek Halmazna in the title rôle in a scene from Prometheus *to Beethoven music. Right, Miroslav Kura and Olga Skálová in the principal rôles from* Spartacus *to Khatchaturian music. Both works are in the repertory of the National Theatre of Prague.* *Photos: Svoboda.*



well as the great richness of creative and interpretative forms offered by folk dances. To take from them what is suitable and fuse it with the expressive forms of ballet, to the enrichment of both types of dance, this is a task facing ballet not only in Czechoslovakia, but elsewhere too it appears. Another problem, which the choreographers and dancers are conscientiously trying to solve, is that of the convincing creation and evolution of character, situation and plot. In this connection, much discussion centres round the question of "dancer-actors" and how to utilize in ballet the Stanislavsky system which has so much enriched the art of acting. These discussions and new ideas are making considerable impact on the older conventions of ballet.

The State dancing schools are an achievement in which some pride is taken. Immediately after the Second World War, departments of dance were established in the music conservatories at Prague, Brno and Bratislava, where talented young dancers could follow a four-year course. In addition to the basic practical subjects like classical dance, folk dance, gymnastics and so on, the pupils also receive a thorough musical education and become acquainted with general cultural history; great care is taken to ensure that the coming generation of dancers will be artists in every sense and thoroughly educated people. The schools are selective; only really talented and interested pupils are accepted. There are



SOVIET REPRODUCTIONS : Above, a scene from the National Theatre of Prague's production of Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet. *Left, Vera Avratová, as Zarema, and Rudolf Karhanek as Khan Girei in* Bakhchisaray Fountain. *Below, Clastimil Jílek as Nurali in another scene from the same ballet by Asafiev. Photos : Svoboda.*

from 15 to 20 pupils in each class and tuition is free. Students who lack means are granted state scholarships in addition.

For training choreographers, teachers and dance theoreticians, State schools have also been established as part of the Academy of Theatre Arts in Prague and the School of Musical Arts in Bratislava. The courses at these university-level schools are for four to five years. Tuition there is free too and graduates receive a university diploma. The training produces theatre choreographers, directors of dance *ensembles,* teachers and so on. In addition to these State schools, there are still some private schools of dancing, whose curricula are mostly of a practical nature.

Ballet masters and choreographers direct the ballet companies, and many of them are active dancers as well. Besides these duties they also look after the training of their *ensembles.* There are among them some quite young artists who are now coming to the fore, for instance Josef Skoda, from Liberec, whose successes include an imaginative production of Asafiev's *Bakhchisaray Fountain,* and Jirí Nemecek, from Plzen, who is now *maitre de ballet* at the National Theatre in Prague. The untimely deaths of the three choreographers Jencík, Machov and Psotá however deprived Czechoslovakia of the ablest figures in this field.

Three dancers who have been awarded the title of "State Prize-Winner" are Olga Skálová, Vera Avratová and Miroslav Kura. Olga Skálová, prima ballerina at the National Theatre in Prague, was trained at the Psotá ballet school. She has an excellent classical technique which is never employed in a too demonstrative or brittle way, and beneath a somewhat cool exterior she conceals passionate feeling. Her Odette in *Swan Lake* has a compelling tenderness and a moving lyricism. In the rôle of Zarema in Asafiev's *Bakhchisaray Fountain,* however, we see her create an altogether different personality as the passionate Georgian. Olga Skálová has met and mastered the demands of her rôles with sure feeling. She puts a bit of her own personality into each one.

Vera Avratová, prima ballerina from Brno, is the type of dancer who may be characterised as *danseuse noble.* She also acquired her excellent classical technique at the Psotá school. Her Odette is really the queen of the swans, and her portrayal of Zarema seeks to embody the very nobility and dignity of the whole Georgian people. She does not like to dance comic or lightly frivolous rôles — they are not in her register.

Miroslav Kura, who came from the Brno ballet to become a soloist with the National Theatre in Prague, is among the most popular ballet artists in Czechoslovakia. His technique is not acrobatic, but despite this it is dazzling. He accomplishes long beautiful leaps, brilliant *pirouettes* and harmonious, distinguished poses. His expressions and gestures are natural and simple.

Continued on page 34

NATIONAL WORKS: Top right, a scene from the story of The Brave Tailor *in Oskar Nedbal's* From Fairy Tale to Fairy Tale.

Middle right, Helen Fenclová (centre, as the Bad Princess) in Salt Above Gold *to Jan Hanus music.*

Bottom right, Oldrich Stodola, as the Dark Huntsman, and Zora Semberová in the title rôle from Zbyuek Vostrák's Viktora. *All these ballets are in the repertory of the National Theatre of Prague. Photos: Svoboda.*

FREDERIC FRANKLIN: The British dancer who starred in Russian and British companies and who now is co-director, choreographer and principal dancer with the Washington Ballet.
Photo: Maurice Seymour.

Ballet Blossoms in Washington D.C.

It is a British dancer, choreographer and ballet master — Frederic Franklin — who has put ballet on the map in the United States' capital

by ARTHUR TODD

WHEN a ballet company is heralded in the U.S. Congress, that's really news in America because our government often isn't as aware of dance as some might wish. However, in a speech titled "Is Washington, D.C., Really a Hick Town?", the Hon. Harris B. McDowell, Jnr., of Delaware, a member of the House of Representatives, made special mention of the "Washington Ballet, which has just acquired Frederic Franklin as its Co-Director and should show steady improvement." Those aware of dance trends in this country, of course, were well aware of the growing importance of the Washington Ballet since it was formed in 1956 and when it engaged Frederic Franklin to stage its classic repertory the following year.

Civic ballets, which have existed under various names in the United States for the last three decades, recently have come into full flower across the length and breadth of America. It would be safe to say, however, that the most attention has been centred on the Washington Ballet. Already a success in its home city as well as in Wheeling, Baltimore, Buffalo and San Domingo, their recent summer engagement at Ted Shawn's Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival focused nation-wide interest on this four-year-old company that has come so far so quickly under the guidance of Frederic Franklin.

To go back to the beginning of its history, the Washington Ballet was formed in the autumn of 1956 under the direction of the late Lisa Gardiner and Mary Day. This company sprang from their Washington School of Ballet which, in turn, was formed in 1944 by these two native Washingtonians, and they had as their dream a national school with its own resident company which as is found in every major capital in Europe. Lisa Gardiner, who had appeared with Pavlova, originally taught Mary Day and, with the aid of Jean Riddell, who wanted to further their work and start a ballet company with their support, they soon were able to join forces with the National Symphony Orchestra to present such three-act ballets as *Hansel and Gretel* and *Cinderella* at holiday times. From these first successes grew a resident company of thirty-five dancers that was sponsored by the Washington Ballet Guild. By 1957, it was then possible for the company to engage Frederic Franklin to teach and rehearse the dancers in such ballets as *Les Sylphides, Swan Lake* Act II, *Prince Igor* and *Raymonda* that were added to the repertoire that includes such works as Mary Day's *Hi Spri, Modern Madrigal* and *Ondine.*

At first, Frederic Franklin commuted between New York and Washington, spending four days a week in the capital and the other three in New York at the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo School.

When Lisa Gardiner died in 1958, before fully realising her dream, Mary Day appointed Frederic Franklin as co-director. Within a year after joining forces with the company, he gave it a new lustre and importance that soon attracted as guest stars such internationally noted dancers as Alicia Markova, Alexandra Danilova, Maria Tallchief, Melissa Hayden, Alicia Alonso, Mia Slavenska, Igor Youskevitch and André Eglevsky. Obviously, the company was on its way under the guidance of one of the most versatile and valuable dance talents to come to America from Britain.

For audiences in America, as well as in Britain, Frederic Franklin's name churns up thoughts of many of the great ballet companies. Born in Liverpool, England, he had, as Wendy Toye recalls, "an absolutely first-rate all-round training as a boy with the Sheila Elliott Clarke School and was outstanding in everything he did. When I first saw Fred, he was dancing in the chorus of a show in London and before that he had been with the Jackson Boys in Paris as well as all over England. We danced together for many years, in every field of entertainment from cabaret and music hall to ballet. I'm sure Freddie has found this wide experience invaluable, if only in understanding how to deal with a wide variety of people.

"Fred always was a wonderful leader and organiser and always had that terrific gift of making everyone love working for him and making the work so interesting and such fun," recounts Wendy Toye. "He has the most fantastic memory for choreography of anyone I have ever met. This isn't entirely something he's worked on although I'm sure he's improved it over the years, and with necessity, but basically it's a gift — I have known him after years hear a piece of music that perhaps he and I might have danced to, and remember every step, not only of his but of anyone else who was in it. All this tied up with his artistic integrity, and the amount he has to offer young artists from his own knowledge, gifts and achievements, apart from the people he has worked with and the great artists he has partnered, makes him the absolute ideal man for his job now."

Before joining the Markova-Dolin Com-

DIRECTORS AT THE PILLOW: Mary Day and Franklin, both directors of the Washington Ballet, at Jacob's Pillow when their company was appearing there this year.
Photo: Dance News.

pany in 1935, Frederic Franklin studied ballet in London with Legat and Kyasht, had appeared in Paris with Mistinguette and Josephine Baker. Says Alicia Markova, "Dear Freddie joined our Markova-Dolin Ballet in 1935, as a young boy full of talent and enthusiasm; and today he is still a young man, with a vast knowledge as a dancer, partner and ballet master. I think the Washington Ballet are most fortunate in having Frederic Franklin as a Director." Anton Dolin adds, "During the years 1935-37, of great dancing and directing activity as well, Fred was a pillar of strength, and without him, on several occasions, I sometimes wonder how the performances would have been possible. At first, he was an understudy, but towards the end of the first year he became accepted in his own right. Like many others, I can happily say Fred began his career with me and, under guidance, a true Dolin protegé. What a magnificent result he has shown over these years all America knows."

By the time Frederic Franklin arrived in America to join Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, he already had an enviable dance experience and background that became increasingly evident during his long tenure with this company. Among the rôles then or later created for him was that of the Baron in *Gaité Parisienne,* the Spirit of Creation in *Seventh Symphony,* both Massine ballets, and the leading male rôle in Balanchine's *Danses Concertantes.* In 1942, Agnes de Mille cast him as the Champion Roper for her *Rodeo.* "When we were rehearsing," says Agnes de Mille, "he was

ONDINE: *Three pictures of Mary Day's version of the "Ondine" legend which uses Sibelius music. Above, George Mozer, as Ondine's father, Franklin as the Knight, Hans, and Patricia Sorrell as Ondine's Mother. Below left, Franklin as the Knight. Below right, Mimi Paul in the title rôle.*

ETALAGE: *Left, Marcia Barrett and Robert Davis in the second part of the ballet choreographed by Franklin to Liszt music. Above, Marcia Barrett, Robert Davis and Jacqueline Hepner in another movement from the same work whose title means "Display".*

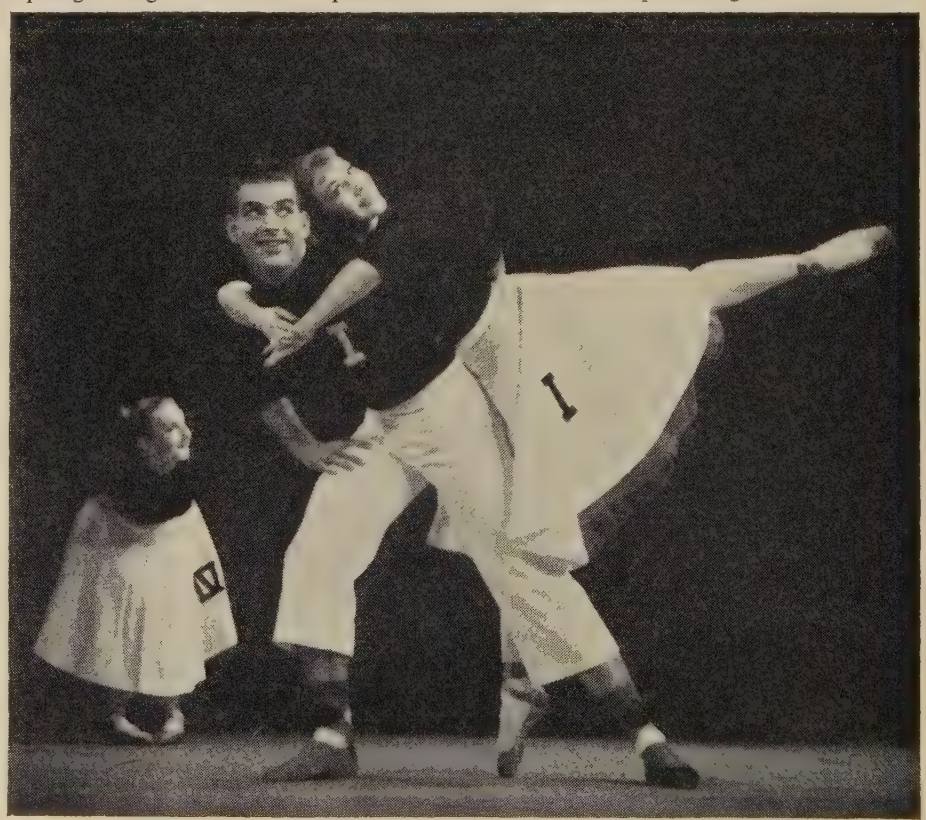
HI-SPRI *(below): Robert Davis and Paula Mackay in a ballet by Mary Day to Shostakovitch music. This work was also given by the Washington Ballet during their season at the Jacob's Pillow Festival.* *Photo: John Van Lund.*

receptive and helpful. He marshalled the rehearsals. He's terribly respectful of anything he thinks is good. If I had a company, I would make him Regisseur. I'm mad for him. He's from Liverpool and a good tennis player. As a character dancer, I compare him with Woizikowski. He also is a marvellous partner and he has a beautiful sense of musical exactness."

Alexandra Danilova, prima ballerina during Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo's brightest period in America, who appeared opposite Frederic Franklin in numerous ballets, is especially aware of his background and its value to a young company. "After all," she claims, "he has worked under the greatest choreographers of the twentieth century — Massine, Balanchine, Ashton, Fokine and Nijinska. He's so good in Spanish style because he was trained by Massine and Argentinita." Danilova, who has been a guest star with The Washington Ballet finds it "a very young and interesting company". She adds, "It is interesting that such important dance figures are doing so much in America yet the English don't seem to be aware of it nor have they seen it. How strange that someone like Frederic Franklin is not invited to show his talent in London in his homeland!"

Leon Danielian, who has been Premier Danseur as well as choreographer for Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, recalls another facet of Frederic Franklin's gifts that make him so valuable now in Washington. "I remember when George Balanchine choreographed *Serenade, Night Shadow* and *Ballet Imperial* when we both were with the company. After some ten years, Fred revived *Ballet Imperial* and invited me to a rehearsal. I must say that what he did looked as perfect as the day Balanchine finished it. If a company does a revival of his, it will be as close as anyone remembers it — better than anyone I know, even the choreographer. When they finish a ballet they forget it but he remembers it."

Franklin has a very positive and affirmative approach about the road that The Washington Ballet is taking. "Speaking on behalf of The Washington Ballet Guild and my co-director Miss Mary Day," he says, "I would like to express our united wish that The Washington Ballet adhere to the noble traditions of this great art. Our aims are high, and the dedication of this young, talented group of dancers is inspiring. To give them the deepest understanding of the ballet our repertoire has been chosen with great care. Our ballets range from the true classic through the character to the modern. We are working towards a resident company in the nation's capital. This can only be achieved by hard work and devotion and it becomes our solemn duty to guide and cherish the young dancers in the quest of great ballet."



Stravinsky : *Petrushka.* Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (Antal Dorati). Mercury MMA 11105; S AMS 16056. 12 in. 37*s.* 9½*d.*

Dorati's *Petrushka*

NEW RECORDS
by DAVID HUNT

DORATI'S previous Mercury recording of *Petrushka,* now deleted, has long remained my favourite despite the attractions of later stereo versions by Monteux and Ansermet. This new recording is without the shrillness of Mercury's earlier effort and has, of course, in its stereo edition all the advantages of twin-channel reproduction; but it is not only from the engineering point of view that it surpasses its predecessor.

The Minneapolis Symphony's playing is just as brilliant as before — it could hardly have been more so, for at its best this is one of the world's top virtuoso orchestras. Dorati, however, has generally intensified his reading; and though the greater realism of the recording contributes to this impression, there is no doubt that the performance is even more dynamic and full of dramatic point than previously.

The sparer revised scoring of 1947 is used, and its every detail can surely never have been brought out with more incisive clarity, nor all the ballet's crowded incident more graphically evoked through the medium of its music alone.

Only two minor qualifications need be made, which do not apply to the earlier version. The first concerns the balance of the piano in relation to the orchestra. It is important, especially in the scene in Petrushka's cell, that the piano, representing him, be allowed full solo status: here it tends to be a little too backward, so that it is swallowed up in *tuttis,* in both mono and stereo recordings.

My second reservation applies to the break for turnover, which comes just after the flute's lead-in to the Ballerina's dance with the Moor, a particularly unfortunate moment for the performance to be interrupted.

Nevertheless this is undoubtedly the most exciting *Petrushka* on records. Even those who prefer the more opulent, fuller sound of the original orchestration should make a point of hearing the performance. The best recording of the 1911 score is Monteux's on RCA, though the Paris Conservatoire's playing falls a good deal below the Minneapolis Symphony's in precision and vitality.

Bea Lillie and the Animals

Prokofiev: *Peter and the Wolf.* Saint-Saëns: *Carnival of the Animals.* Beatrice Lillie (narrator), Julius Katchen, Gary Graffman (pianos), Kenneth Heath ('cello), London Symphony Orchestra (Skitch Henderson). Decca LXT 5577; S SXL 2218. 12 in. 38*s.* 1½*d.*

THE text used in this new recording of *Peter and the Wolf* is a racy revised version of the tale by someone called Bidrum Vabish that differs considerably from the translation used in all the previous recordings and in Frank Staff's ballet. More controversial still is Bea Lillie's facetious delivery of the narration, which seems calculated to appeal more to sophisticated adults than to children — in fact, the slightly sinister note of her final "Goodnight children" suggests that Auntie Bea has been listening to Auntie Rotter in Peter Sellers' recorded parody of Children's Hour.

However, whereas all this makes a hilarious change and scarcely affects one's enjoyment of Prokofiev's witty score, the lame and very shaggy doggerel of Ogden Nash's nonsense verses for *Carnival of the Animals* becomes increasingly intrusive with repetition. Can anyone really want to hear over and over again while *Le Cygne* is being played :

The swan can swim while sitting down
For pure conceit he takes the crown
He looks in the mirror over and over
And claims to have never heard of Pavlova?

Musically, both performances are good, if not outstanding, the recording marvellously colourful and spacious.

Bliss Conducts Bliss

Bliss : *Checkmate* — Suite. Handel : *The Water Music* — Suite. Purcell arr. Bliss : *Set of Act-Tunes and Dances.* Sinfonia of London (Sir Arthur Bliss). World Record Club T 52. 12 in. 23*s.* 9*d.*

IT seems very odd that this is the first recording on LP of any of Bliss's virile *Checkmate* music. Though better than none at all, it is a pity that only half the score is given — *Dance of the Red Pawns, Dance of the Four Knights, Entry of the Black Queen* (not her dance, as claimed on the label), *The Red Knight's Mazurka, Ceremony of the Red Bishops* and *Finale.* Not altogether surprisingly, the composer makes the music sound far more gripping than did Irving on the deleted Columbia 78 recording of a slightly different selection, though the much more vivid reproduction on the new LP is no doubt partly responsible for that impression.

On the reverse, Bliss secures stylish performances of six of the best-known numbers from the *Water Music* (in Anthony Baines' edition) and his own suite of five pieces taken from Purcell's stage-works. Enjoyable though these are, the excellence of both playing and recording make me regret all the more that this side was not also devoted to *Checkmate.*

Bayer's Dolls

Bayer : *Die Puppenfee* — excerpts. Vienna Symphony Orchestra (Paul Walter). Fontana CFE 15052. 7 in. 14*s.* 7*d.*

HERE is an intriguing selection from the toyshop ballet that provided the direct inspiration for *La Boutique Fantasque. Die Puppenfee* was first given in 1888 at the Vienna State Opera, where Josef Bayer was chief ballet conductor from 1885 until his death in 1913. The original scenario and choreography were by the dancer Hassreiter. Later productions included Katti Lanner's version for the Empire in London and Legat's for St. Petersburg, while Clustine's version, as *The Fairy Doll,* was a mainstay of the Pavlova repertoire for many years.

Bayer's music is unmistakably and delightfully Viennese in idiom, despite the variety of national styles it purports to depict — 3/4 time predominates and even the Japanese dance is a slow mazurka. Almost all the excerpts played would not be unworthy of Johann Strauss, of whom Bayer was clearly a great admirer. The performance has all the requisite charm and lively attack, and the recording is agreeable if somewhat over-resonant.

Bayer wrote many other ballets, which — on this showing — might well be worth looking into.

Tchaikovsky with Menuhin

Tchaikovsky: *The Sleeping Beauty* — Introduction; *Entrance of the Fairies; Pas de Six — Intrada, Variations* 4 and 5; *Garland Waltz; Rose Adagio; Aurora's Variation; Polacca; Pas de Trois* ("Florestan and his Sisters") — *Intrada, Variations* 2 and 4, *Coda; Red Riding Hood and the Wolf; Grand Pas de Deux — Intrada, Adagio, Variation* 2, *Coda* ("The Three Ivans"); *Finale and Apotheosis.* Yehudi Menuhin (violin), Philharmonia Orchestra (Efrem Kurtz). HMV ALP 1790. 12 in. 39*s.* 9*d.*

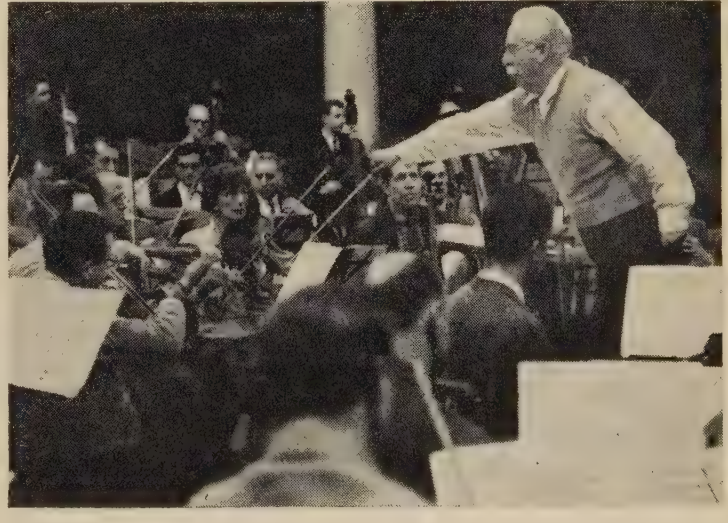
I AM told that it was at Menuhin's own request that he played the violin solos in both this selection from *The Sleeping Beauty* and the earlier companion disc of *Swan Lake* excerpts (ALP 1644). Would that other equally distinguished players would follow suit, and not only in recorded performances!

One of the functions of the Tsar's Court Violinist in St. Petersburg was to accompany the prima ballerina's variations in full-length ballets at the Maryinsky. Such eminent virtuosi as Vieuxtemps, Weniawski and Leopold Auer were among those who carried on this tradition.

At the first performances of *The Sleeping Beauty* Carlotta Brianza danced Aurora's *variations* in Acts 1 and 3 accompanied by Auer, and Tchaikovsky bore in mind the great Hungarian violinist's special qualities when writing these dances, as well as the elaborate solo part in the *Entr'acte* between the two scenes of Act 2.

This *Entr'acte,* omitted from the Royal

(Continued on page 34)



COMPOSER Sir Arthur Bliss recording, in Kingsway Hall with the Sinfonia of London, a suite from his music for Ninette de Valois' Checkmate, for the World Record Club disc reviewed on this page. Photo: Auerbach

curtain up!

BALLET STAR WEDS: On August 27, John Gilpin married Sally Judd, a member of London's Festival Ballet, in which Gilpin had been a star since its outset. Here they are at the Londonderry House reception after the wedding. On Gilpin's left is Alicia Markova, whom he has partnered on many occasions; on his right is S.A.S. Princess Antoinette de Monaco, who has been a great friend for many years.

Photo: Pamela Chandler.

Gilpin on the move

SHORTLY after John Gilpin said "hello" to a state of matrimony, by marrying Sally Judd on August 27 (see picture above), he also said "goodbye" to the company in which he has starred for eleven years — London's Festival Ballet. Not that it is a final goodbye because he will be appearing with the company as guest artist during its London seasons.

This news can have come as a surprise to nobody for it has been rumoured for years that he might make a break. As he so rightly said in a press interview, "a change is good for everyone". And there is no doubt that after so long a time touring the world with one company there is a tendency for staleness to creep in specially if after so long there has been no ballet created to fit his remarkable talent — *Witch Boy* and *Etudes*, in which Gilpin shines more than in anything else, were both revivals. The change will possibly be good for both parties concerned — both Gilpin and London's Festival Ballet. As far as Gilpin is concerned, it means that now he will be free to dance in all the places and with all the companies he has had to turn down owing to his committment to one company. To start with, he makes a concert tour of South Africa with Belinda Wright for eight weeks beginning in October, then he returns to London for the annual R.A.D. Gala in December and also to dance at Festival Hall for the Christmas season. After that, who knows? He may go to America to dance with Jerome Robbins' Ballets U.S.A. when it re-forms next year or he may go anywhere. One thing is certain and that is that he will be welcome in almost any part of the world.

However, a warning note creeps in — it is not a good idea for artists, as young as he is, to "guest" for too long—concert engagements can be very limiting and guest appearances with established companies equally so. Unless every company is prepared to mount a new work for every guest star then they are forced to appear only in the few usual classics. I think that most artists who break away from established companies have been forced to admit this, if only to themselves, in the end. Gilpin is too great a star just to drift about the face of the globe for the rest of his career. But then of course there *are* other British companies who would welcome him, and no prizes are offered for their names.

The Royal Ballet turns eastward

UP to now, the Royal Ballet's main focus has been towards the West and, at the moment, the main company is beginning a five-month tour of the United States, which will be the sixth time they have made the trek. Everything points at the moment, though, to a far greater turning eastward in the future. Though nothing is confirmed, it seems possible that the main company will visit Russia some time next year, though a possibility of this happening next Spring is now ruled out. Then in the Spring, the touring section is due to visit the Far East and visit some of those places where Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes have already paved the way by their guest appearances.

It is not only companies that will go East but also individual teachers. The Royal Ballet's professor of dance, Ailne Philips, has already left to teach and mount ballets in Turkey, a country where two other Britishers — Molly Lake and Travis Kemp — have already done yeoman service in this direction over the past years. Now another Royal Ballet artist, Miro Zolan, has gone to Teheran to teach and create works for the National Ballet Academy of Iran. With his wife, former dancer Sandra Vane, and son, he expects to stay there for at least eighteen months. By the time all this is completed there will be only two quarters that the Royal Ballet has not penetrated — the Arctic and the Antarctic. Perhaps they should consider the possibilities here as quickly as possible because other countries have a very beady eye trained on those frozen wastes and anyway penguins are the best audience in the world.

Hoodoo on Voodoo

WHAT on earth really went wrong with the Haitian Voodoo dancers? Three nights before the end of their season at the Westminster Theatre, the audience was sitting waiting for the curtain to go up — it never did. Money was returned and no further performances were given in the theatre. Though outside the theatre, in a courtyard, anybody happening to pass at the time got a free Voodoo performance. This was a kind of protest meeting which had something to do with a dispute about their contract. Presumably the spirits were being called in to try and settle the matter.

What really happened though will remain one of the mysteries of 1960. Perhaps it was that, after pretending to be possessed by spirits six nights a week, the devil really got into the dancers. Even if this is not the right answer, it might still be a good one for the dancers to stick to.

Not enough

CONGRATULATIONS to Lord Harewood, the new artistic director of the Edinburgh Festival, on securing private backing towards the cost of the new projected £100,000 opera house for Edinburgh.

Ever since these festivals were first inaugurated the continual grouse has been that the theatres in Edinburgh are neither good enough nor big enough for the world's major companies appearing there. So this new move is certainly one in the right direction even if it is not very far on the road.

Of course a proper theatre is needed for opera, but what about ballet? While, at the moment, opera squeezes a little uncomfortably into the King's Theatre, ballet positively suffers at the Empire. This year again, reports of the Royal Ballet season tell of disasters such as falling scenery which not only ruined the performances but could have had tragic consequences as far as the performers were concerned. For the leading festival in the British Isles, almost in the world, this kind of thing is simply just not good enough.

Come, Lord Harewood, why stop halfway? You need *two* opera houses to do full justice to your festival, and we shall not be happy until you have them.

Workshop scores again

SOMETIMES in the past we have had hard things to say about workshop programmes, doubtless because, like most other people, we foolishly expect a stunning new choreographer or masterpiece to emerge from every performance. Eventually quite a lot came out of the old Ballet Workshop at the Mercury Theatre though it was not really apparent at the time; now it is Sunday Ballet Club's turn. Two of their creations are in the repertory of Western Theatre Ballet. These are Ray Powell's *One in Five* and Meriel Evans' *Love Duet,*

both of which went into the repertory when the company was in Cambridge during mid-September. Another new work for Western Theatre Ballet this season is *Ode* by Peter Darrell to Stravinsky music.

Sunday Ballet Club was also responsible for launching Royal Ballet dancer, Clover Roope, as a choreographer. Now she has left the Royal Ballet and has joined Western Theatre Ballet in order to gain more choreographic experience. It is believed that her first work for her new company will appear early in the New Year.

Further afield, Sunday Ballet Club is also having success. One of its choreographers, Norman Dixon, is probably to become associated with a new ballet school in Portugal which is likely to receive a grant from the ever-generous Gulbenkian Foundation. Dixon, it appears, will take charge of the upper school and also direct a small concert group.

Not as it seems

ACCORDING to the odd wording in the new Covent Garden hand-out, it appears that when the Royal Ballet (touring section) opens its Christmas season on December 14, the repertory will include: "*Cinderella*. The London première of a new ballet by Kenneth MacMillan with music by Matyas Seiber and scenery and costumes by Nicholas Georgiadis." Many people have been under the impression, from this, that they are going to see yet another version of the girl who goes to the ball. In fact MacMillan's new ballet is about a girl who goes to a dance but with very different results and is, in fact, at the moment un-named. This nameless work has its world première in Oxford when the company is touring there in November. Lynn Seymour and Anne Heaton have principal rôles.

An Englishman abroad

IT was one of the ironies of recent ballet history that condemned Frederic Franklin (subject of an article elsewhere in this number) to spend most of his career in America, heading a Russian company.

In spite of this he remains very English and when I met him over here on a holiday recently, I was very struck by the way he had so obviously remained loyal in spirit to the people with whom he worked in his early days as well as to his American and Russian colleagues of more recent years.

At present he commutes between New York and Washington, teaching in both towns and directing the Washington Civic Ballet. He is determined to repay some of the benefits he received from America by building up the Washington company. But I hope that it will not be too long before he is tempted home by an offer from a British company.

As well as having been one of the finest English male dancers, he is, after all, one of the most widely respected and best loved of ballet-masters. His knowledge and experience and almost photographic memory for ballets, gained during his many years with Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo when it was at its height, ought to be put to use in England. There is still plenty of room for people of his calibre and I hope that some company will remember this fact.

A teacher moves in

A FEW months ago, I was distressed by the fact that that fine teacher, Kathleen Crofton, might be leaving England. For a time she did, and taught in Switzerland and Holland, but her school carried on. Now she is back and it is splendid news that the Royal Ballet have thought fit to use her services. She is to give classes to the touring section, for part of their tour and while they are in London, and I know that her knowledge will be of the greatest benefit to the company. This does not mean that she is giving up her studio in Great Newport Street as she will only be with the Royal Ballet during part of a few days each week in London and for one in every three weeks during the tour. As I have emphasised before, we simply cannot afford to let teachers as valuable as this leave England for ever, and it is much to Dame Ninette de Valois' credit that she has realised this also.

Ten thousand mile tour

TO celebrate its 21st Anniversary, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet is embarking on a tour of Eastern Canada that will take them 10,000 miles before it is finished — a rather exhausting way of celebrating a birthday I would think, but so as to reach the vast and rapidly growing Canadian ballet public there is no way other than to go out to them. When they return to home ground they will give a new ballet by Don Gillies — *Ballet 3*. Gillies, it will be remembered, did some very interesting work for Ballet Workshop and he was generally considered to be a very promising young choreographer. After dancing in several successful musicals in London, he later joined the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet for eighteen months. After his return to his native Toronto eight years ago he danced and choreographed for the Canadian Broadcasting Company there and has built up a great reputation for himself right across Canada.

R.B. dancer and the Princess

IT was a well-kept secret and few even of their closest friends knew that Royal Ballet dancer Clive Molloy married Princess Bushra Barazani, from the Middle East, in London on August 20. A fortnight after their wedding they were parted for nearly six months because on September 6, Molloy flew off to America with his company to complete a long tour of America which will cause the newly-weds to be parted until well into February of next year.

happy birthday to...

		October
Nadia Nerina	The Royal Ballet	21
Alan Woodard	London's Festival Ballet	21
John Field	Royal Ballet Organisation	21
Pamela Hart	London's Festival Ballet	23
Diane Elesmore	London's Festival Ballet	26
Patricia Neary	Canadian National Ballet	27
Elaine Fifield		28
Louis Godfrey	London's Festival Ballet	29
Gale Law	London's Festival Ballet	29
Patricia Thorogood	The Royal Ballet	29
Serge Golovine	De Cuevas International Ballet	30
Janet Overton	In *The Princess*	30
Michael Maule	Ballets U.S.A.	31
		November
Selena Wylie	In *The Princess*	1
Audrey Harman	Royal Ballet Organisation	2
Lawrence Adams	Canadian National Ballet	2
Carmen Mathe	De Cuevas International Ballet	3
Antonio		4
Donald McAlpine	In *The Princess*	4
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Dancer You Will Know

Photo : Roy Round.

ELIZABETH ANDERTON

BORN in London on May 28, 1938. Trained in the Cecchetti method with Nesta Brooking. Won first Cyril Beaumont Scholarship in 1952. Joined Royal Ballet School in 1953 and the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet in 1955. Entered the Royal Ballet Company in 1957, becoming a soloist in 1958.

Created rôle : Johanna in Sweeney Todd. *Rôles : Peasant girl, Leader in* Pas de Six, Pas de Trois, *Cygnet and Leading Czardas in* Swan Lake; *Aurora, Enchanted Garden Fairy, Blue Bird in* The Sleeping Beauty; *Swanilda in* Coppélia; *Peasant* pas de deux *and Leading Wili in* Giselle; *Waltz in* Les Sylphides; *Blue Girl in* Les Patineurs; *Young Girl in* Solitaire; *Loving Couple in* Veneziana; *Milkmaid in* Façade; *the Lyrical One in* The Angels; *Yellow Girl in* The Blue Rose; *in* La Fête Etrange; *Blanche in* Pineapple Poll.

TO be dancing Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty* within three years of joining the Royal Ballet is meteoric progress. But although Elizabeth Anderton is clearly regarded by the company as "ballerina-potential", her appearances in London have been comparatively few, which makes that potential unusually difficult to assess.

One thing is plain, and that is her unusual intelligence as a dancer. All her rôles have the air of having been carefully thought out, even though many of them are given with a neatly calculated spontaneity. Her Swanilda, now seen at Covent Garden, is a remarkably assured portrayal — witty and alive. Equally successful was her first created rôle this year in Cranko's *Sweeney Todd*. Although she is a strong classical technician, so far she appears to have greater possibilities as a *demi-caractère* dancer than as a classical ballerina. Yet this, in the nature of things, must be more of a guess than an opinion, and resourceful talents like hers have a happy knack of providing surprises.

PANCHA-TANTRA : *A scene from the Little Ballet Troupe of Bombay's work, literally meaning "five techniques", which is a study in the art of statecraft.*

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL 1960 : Part 1

The Little Ballet Troupe of Bombay

by CLIVE BARNES

THE first part of this year's Edinburgh Festival was so unadventurous from a ballet point of view that even the most rabid of London's ballet enthusiasts could hardly have felt themselves tempted northwards. The Royal Ballet in *Danses Concertantes, Le Baiser de la Fée* and *Petrushka,* and a second programme of *Ballabile, La Péri* and *The Prince of the Pagodas, Act III,* would appear to lack a certain something in International Festivity. While it is doubtless pleasant, and indeed desirable, for the good residents of Edinburgh to get a squint at the Royal Ballet, I should have thought it preferable for all concerned if they got it out of Festival time.

The second week at the dreary Empire Theatre — it is typical of the way in which ballet is regarded by the Festival authorities that while there is now talk of a new opera house in Edinburgh to take the opera, not a word has been said of the nightly enormities suffered by ballet at the inadequate Empire — was split between that Spanish duo, Susana y José, for the first three days, and the Little Ballet Troupe of Bombay for the last two. As the two Spanish dancers were performing much the same programme as they produced in London last year, I delayed my visit until the arrival of the Indians on September 2. This company, heralded without a great deal of advance publicity, turned out to be one of the surprises of the Festival. It is, for the West at least, something quite new in Indian ballet, and proved to be almost completely entrancing.

The company was founded in 1952 by the late Shanti Bardhan, a former pupil of Uday Shankar. Shanti Bardhan has sought to strengthen the classical traditions in Indian dancing, chiefly by emphasising the folk-lore elements. His company, which is now touring under the sponsorship of the Indian government, is revolutionary and exciting. Bardhan himself was clearly a choreographer with very great imaginative power, and his ballets are remarkable examples of how it is possible to blend the new with the old into a harmonious whole. There have, of course, been other attempts seen in the West at full-scale Indian ballets that used the Indian technique for a narrative purpose. Probably the best remembered example is Ram Gopal's *Legend of the Taj Mahal.* But although Gopal himself is possibly a finer dancer than anyone in the Bardhan troupe, in the *Taj Mahal* he made the fatal mistake of attempting to impose classical Indian dance forms on a framework of Western ballet, and the resulting hybrid bore eloquent testimony to Kipling's oft-quoted, yet generally inaccurate, dictum that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". Bardhan has made no such mistake. His ballets are uncompromisingly Indian in every respect, although with judicious but extensive use of Indian folk dancing he has greatly increased the actual dancing and ruthlessly cut down the amount and complexity of the mime passages.

Pancha-Tantra

PANCHA-TANTRA — subtitled *The Art of Making Friends* — is based on one of those animal fables that have been part of Oriental, and particularly Indian, literature for centuries. *Pancha-Tantra* (it means literally *The Five Techniques)* is one of the most fascinating of all these fables. Over two hundred versions of it have been recorded in more than fifty languages, and it is known in countries as far apart as Java and Iceland. The whole book sets out, in terms of animal fables, the principles of politics or statecraft, and Bardhan has taken his *Art of Making Friends* from the second part (or "technique") of the complete work.

To me the whole idea of having people dressed up as animals on stage, or even presenting animals in an anthropomorphic fashion, is utterly repulsive, and should be put down by the R.S.P.C.A.! But the Indians have a way with animal stories, and can present animal fables both in literature and, apparently, on the stage with a complete lack of self-consciousness and with a conviction that brushes aside my prejudices. The ballet has no structure, but is just a series of loosely-told stories, offered as lessons in the art of friendship. The narrative shows how three animals, a crow, a mouse and a tortoise organise other animals and birds to keep the human hunters out of their woodland domains.

The ballet, which was first produced in the Little Ballet Troupe's own Open Air Theatre in Bombay on February 12, 1955, is an experiment in "total theatre". It uses a considerable amount of spoken dialogue — unfortunately unintelligible to English audiences — as well as songs, dances, mime and music. It is a complete fusion of all the theatre arts, in a manner worthy of the Chinese.

Bardhan's choreography is simple and direct. Perhaps his greatest success has been in the manner in which he has economically portrayed the various fauna of his fable. These little choreographic sketches combine wit and charm with observation. The Crow is a particularly ingenious and lovable creation, and Bardhan simulates his flight with remarkable success. The dancer crouches down, running along waving his arms from the shoulders; as he runs he rises slowly into an upright position with his arm movements at the same time becoming more powerful. Then when perfectly upright the dancer stars to wheel round the stage, still waving his arms, now in slower, broader movements.

The simple décor and music blend perfectly with the dancing and add to the ballet's air of quiet, distinctive charm. The dancing is exceptionally well disciplined, while the acting is altogether admirable. The one loss — and I think it is a fairly serious one — is that the quite extensive Indian dialogue has not been translated. Perhaps an English commentary, even with all the loss of atmosphere that would involve — might be the solution here.

Ramayana

PUPPETS have quite often exercised a fascination on choreographers, but I

RAMAYANA : *Two scenes from the Little Ballet Troupe of Bombay's work based on a famous Indian saga and told in the form of a puppet-play.*

fancy there has never been a puppet ballet quite like *Ramayana.* This was an early work of the Little Ballet Troupe, first performed at the Jai Hind College Hall in Bombay on January 6, 1953. The story is based on the Ramayana, a long Indian saga telling of a feud between Rama (good king) and Ravana (bad king). The story is so difficult to follow for a European audience (or, at least, it was for me) that the ballet becomes almost a pure spectacle of meetings, partings and battles — particularly battles.

Bardhan has conceived the ballet in the form of a Rajasthani puppet-play. After an introduction set in a village fair (shades of *Petrushka)* the ballet proper is introduced by a couple of "puppet-masters". The dancers of the actual ballet — like *Pancha-Tantra,* a full-evening work — all wear square puppet-masks. These gorgeous masks, quite immobile in expression, give the ballet a quaint air of ritual and formality. They are beautiful works of art, intriguing in their mixture of naïvety and sophistication. These figures are like the archetypal designs of Indian sculpture, while the wonderfully rich, embroidered costumes have all the sumptuous, colourful brilliance of so much Indian painting.

We often think of dance-acting as being largely a matter of mimetic facial gesture, it was therefore illuminating to see how much this troupe was able to express simply through their bodies. The fixed, painted expression of the fantasticated masks actually seemed to change, which was a formidable tribute not only to the acting but also to the lighting and general production.

As in *Pancha-Tantra,* the attractive and very appropriate music was composed by Bahadur Hussain Khan, and in both ballets the dancing of Appuni Karta, Gul Bardhan and Sarmishtha Bardhan was outstandingly eloquent. All in all, this is probably the most entertaining and effective dance troupe to visit us from India since the war.

Dance and Dancers . . . . AT HOME

THE ROYAL BALLET (Touring Section) at Covent Garden

Summer confusion

WHENEVER this subject is mentioned it seems to arouse demons of fury in the Royal Ballet's management but it is no good avoiding the issue that the so-called integration of the two Royal Ballets is getting even more confusing. Take this season, for instance, which opened at Covent Garden on August 15, it had Margot Fonteyn as guest ballerina so the average tourists, for whom this season was principally intended or who anyway formed the main bulk of the audience, were under the impression that they were seeing the principal company. They must have come away from some of the performances with rather mixed feelings as to why the Royal Ballet is cracked-up to be one of the great companies of the West.

This doesn't mean to say that what they saw was not good — some of it was better than the main company then playing in Edinburgh — but by no stretch of imagination or human kindness could it be considered on the same scale or showing the magnificent level of dancing all through that has recently been displayed by the main company at Covent Garden.

It was, though, the actual *corps de ballet* of the touring company who showed up best in the work which opened the season — Fokine's *Les Sylphides.* They realised a nice sense of Romantic occasion and with a far greater feeling for the elusive quality of this masterpiece than is usually seen in the regimentation of the main company's performance — they and their own soloist, Elizabeth Anderton in the first *Valse.* She has a remarkable sensitivity this dancer and although some of the things she did were rather too emphatic and occasionally rather hurried she brings her own ornamentation to the deceptively simple movements. This was welcome and seemed to me to be getting back to something nearer Fokine's intentions. Rosemary Lindsay gave a routine performance of *Prélude* which did not let the work down but then neither did it bring anything of the wistfulness that can make this one of the loveliest solos ever created for a female dancer.

Which brings me, regretfully, to the most bitterly disappointing feature of the whole performance — namely the dancing of the main company's two great stars, Margot Fonteyn and David Blair. As elevation has never been Fonteyn's strong point I fail to see why she should choose to dance the *Mazurka,* a dance which needs a jump above all else. She merely gave the impression of crossing the stage rather than soaring above and skimming across the earth's surface. Hoping that some amends would be made in the later *Valse Pas de Deux,* we had yet another let-down. It was extremely dull and had none of that accord which should exist between a poet and his favourite muse. Yes, of course, she danced it correctly but this work is so much more than dancing it right — it's the feeling of moonlit nostalgia that pervades the whole ballet that *must* be realised if there is any point in dancing it at all.

That all this eludes Fonteyn is surprising because there is probably no finer interpretative artist alive today — just think of what she managed to do in *Ondine.* It may be that some of this lapse was due to her partner Blair who, splendid dancer though he is, does not number Romantic understanding amongst his many qualities. It is as though he is afraid to let himself go in any of the softer expressions of Romanticism. Possibly he feels that it might make him look effeminate; if he does then he is

wrong because, almost without exception, the most Romantic interpreters of the poet rôle in *Les Sylphides* have also been the most virile and manly dancers and Blair is both of these things.

It is odd how both sections of the Royal Ballet can dance Cranko's *Pineapple Poll,* which followed, and yet the younger section of the company is so infinitely better in it. Not so odd really because it was this section that, when the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, originally created it. What is odd is that the main company has been unable to assimilate so many of the work's original subtleties. Anyway the performance under review showed the work to have almost regained the original rollicking high spirits and polish of the first performance which once had them raising the roof up in Rosebery Avenue. Donald Britton has now settled into the stylish sex-appeal of Captain Belaye as though born to it. Johaar Mosaval gives Jasper, the Pot Boy, the pungent wistfulness of a young Massine and makes the scene where he believes Poll to have committed suicide really tear-jerkingly touching. Audrey Farriss brings a slightly hard-boiled charm to the title rôle which was right and she danced only a few shades less well than the rôle's never-to-be-forgotten creator — Elaine Fifield. Both Brenda Taylor as the simpering bride, Blanche, and Margaret Knoesen as the garrulous Mrs. Dimple lend admirable support to these very spirited goings-on, as indeed did the *corps de ballet.* It is heartening to find a comedy work which remains fresh after so many years.

The original point of Ashton's *Birthday Offering,* which ended this programme, was to display the Royal Ballet's ballerinas on the occasion of its quarter-century birthday. This it succeeded in doing most splendidly and was accorded the acclaim it justly deserved — at the time. Frankly I have always been surprised that it has not been retained as a ballerina display-case ever since and trotted out at those many galas we are so often subjected to. A combination of this with Ashton's *La Valse,* for the rest of the soloists and *corps de ballet,* could have been the Royal Ballet's answer to the Paris Opéra's *Grand Défilé* which makes such a stirring spectacle on grand nights in that opera house. But no, in a typical British way the whole thing has been allowed to slide and the feverish attempts at trying to remember and revive this natal offering now show its glory to have been "once upon a time".

The fact is that the work was created for *ballerinas* with each solo built around their respective qualities. As today only one of the glorious seven — Margot Fonteyn — remains then the whole thing becomes a very second-cast affair. And this is the one ballet in the whole contemporary repertory which needs a first-cast or nothing at all. Unfortunately the one remaining original-cast ballerina was off-form on this evening (I hear that she improved at later performances) and her brittle performance, lacking substance, in the solo and *pas de deux* could hardly have acted as any spur to the young entry. However, Merle Park and Annette Page danced well, if with little ballerina aplomb, in the variations originally given by Rowena Jackson and Beryl Grey respectively. Park has a charming personality and somehow this manages to hide certain technical weaknesses which anyway she is gradually and surely mastering. Page is a lovely dancer who needs to develop a "Page" personality rather than give imitations of everyone else — she's almost a dancing Florence Desmond. Maryon Lane, in the Fifield part, and Antoinette Sibley in the Nerina one, failed to leave much impression. Both have not been dancing much lately — Lane because of her recent mother-of-twinshood, Sibley because of illness — so there was an excuse. Though I cannot feel that is an excuse for affectation on Sibley's part. She has potential greatness if ever I saw it but if her main fault is not corrected quickly it will become too ingrained ever to cure.

Which brings me to two dancers, not yet ballerinas, who both showed certain qualities that one expects to see in such ladies — namely Georgina Parkinson and Lynn Seymour. The variations they danced, originally created for Violetta Elvin and Svetlana Beriosova, were always the least interesting choreographically but somehow the newcomers gave them a new authority though this may have had more to do with the falling-off in the ballet's other components than anything else.

Parkinson sometimes fails to give fluidity to her movements but there are times when she achieves real grandeur. I think a Russian teacher could bring out something really great in this beautiful girl. Seymour has a marvellous fluidity and a grandeur that seems to embrace the whole stage — even one the size of Covent Garden. I cannot remember enough of the variation as it originally was, and this looked rather different to me, but no matter for it brought a peak moment to what otherwise had been a rather faded half-hour. Not even the seven cavaliers — nearer to the original cast than the girls — brought that excitement which I can once remember as being so stimulating when all seven danced in unison. The glory which has departed from this work had nothing to do with André Levasseur's costumes which looked as fresh and Maryinsky fin-de-siecle as ever.

P. W.

Todd in Bow Street

THE imp of misdirection really got going with a swing on the programme-making for the evening which brought John Cranko's *Sweeney Todd* to London for the first time — August 16.

After opening with a *Pineapple Poll,* as spirited as on the former occasion with the only cast-change being Doreen Wells, very convincing in the title rôle, it seemed incredible to follow immediately with the new work so much in the same vein and so much inferior. Many of the characters are such near relations of those in the former work that when seen in close proximity it becomes inevitable that we compare them — and the Todd family loses on every round apart from Alix Stone's designing which though still quite excellent became rather diffused on the large stage. The ballet just never had a chance and the decided lack of enthusiasm on the part of the audience was obviously brought about by this quite zany arrangement. Doubtless it would fare much better coming after works such as *Les Sylphides, Danses Concertantes* or *Solitaire.*

Nor can the dancers be blamed for the failure because they all rollicked through this choreographic barn-stormer with immense gusto. Donald Britton is suitably horrid, though less horrid than at Stratford, in the title part. Elizabeth Anderton was full of pie-eyed innocence as the girl Johanna upon whom Todd has designs; she also looked ravishing in the Edwardian musical comedy costume for the work's finale. Both Desmond Doyle, as Johanna's naval fiancé, and Ian Hamilton, as his pukka Indian Army friend, played with a nicely turned sense of humour. Johaar Mosaval's barber's apprentice was a less fortunate, though no less clearly delineated, cousin to his Jasper the pot boy. Other small parts were played with the right amount of extravagance and the Mack Sennett possé of policemen tried their best and it was no fault of theirs that they looked an inferior corps to those who Jerome Robbins once sent chasing through an American musical — *High Button Shoes.*

This is the sort of ballet that would undoubtedly come off, if whittled down drastically, in a superior revue. It has no real place in a repertory such as this specially when placed in the juxtaposition to other works as in this programme. Apart from anything else it is not, except for a brilliant *pas de quatre* with a table (a *pas de table),* very funny.

Back to grim, very grim, reality with Rodrigues' *Blood Wedding* for the final offering. The fact that this work, so much after Garcia Lorca that it can never catch up, has remained popular for over seven years is almost pathetic evidence of the British public's avid thirst for strong dramatic works. Several changes have been made: Death is now a bare-torsoed man (Christopher Gable); the chorus of trees, who in the play pass poetic comment on the sinister happenings, have been felled and removed for firewood; Isabel Lambert has made changes, none for the better, in her costumes. Some of the dresses now look like those Palais de Danse bargains that frequently clutter the Oxford Street windows. Her telescopic setting remains the most Spanish thing about the whole ballet though it is a pity that she has attempted to continue her Andalusian landscape in the back-cloth on to her wings.

The main interest in the work was that it marked the return of Anne Heaton, as the Bride, after her recent retirement which happily proved to be only temporary. She gave a powerful dramatic performance which had almost Nora Kaye stature. Personally I feel that her conception of the rôle is rather too grand, almost on the scale of a Greek tragedy, but as the entire ballet is so wide of Lorca's idea I don't think she can be faulted on this point and the main thing about it was that it managed to project. Donald Britton was a full-blooded Leonardo, the married man who takes another man's bride into the woods on her wedding day, but the slyness of a tortured soul which was originally so graphically realised by David Poole is not present in this otherwise plausible performance. Desmond Doyle does not seem quite right as the wronged Bridegroom, a casting fault more than anything else, and nothing can efface the part's creator, Pirmin Trecu, who both looked right and played it with utter conviction.

Rodrigues' idea of making a ballet from Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* was a brilliant one but it is possibly only Martha Graham, of all this world's dance creators, who could bring it off and translate these poetic depths into eloquent but voiceless movement. What she could convey, which is something beyond the grasp of Rodrigues, is not the slightly novelettish external tragedy but the primeval force which drives the characters, like helpless puppets, to their ultimate destruction.

P. W.

Fetes various

IN every respect except one, the performance of Howard's *La Fête Etrange* by the Royal Ballet's touring company at Covent Garden on August 25 looked almost exactly the same as recent performances by the other Royal Ballet company.

The one exception was that Donald

Britton's interpretation of the Country Boy was so very different from Pirmin Trecu's that the whole balance of relationships among the three principals was changed.

Britton was the first Royal Ballet dancer to play this rôle, thirteen years ago, and at that time his immaturity lent great pathos to his interpretation. Then he grew out of the rôle, and although he still danced it occasionally he made nothing like the same effect.

Now, suddenly, Britton has got back inside the skin of the part. His extrovert enthusiasm held in check, his breezy confidence hidden beneath the clumsiness of a fast-growing adolescent, he still keeps his essential toughness.

Whereas Trecu showed a boy so sensitive, so full of unexpressed longings, that he seemed foredoomed to suffer in love, Britton's Country Boy knows nothing of love until it hits him between the eyes; dazed by it all, he obviously does not understand what has happened to him.

In its different way (a way nearer, perhaps, to the character in the book which inspired the ballet), I find this performance every bit as good as Trecu's. The other principals were less good (Heaton too tragic from the beginning, so that there was no contrast in her moods, and Bennett rather stiff and badly made up), but the *corps de ballet* danced well.

Outstanding were Carole Needham, leading the second (all-girl) *pas de trois,* and Doreen Wells in the first *pas de trois,* in which Ian Hamilton (appearing unannounced in place of the sick Robert Mead) made a good first appearance.

The same evening, Britton partnered Lynn Seymour in the *Don Quixote pas de deux.* Seymour's splendid assurance, her softly rounded fluency and the way her personality hits an audience, were, as ever, a joy to watch, and Britton danced with immense vigour.

Over the *Façade* which followed, memory kindly draws a veil except for Rosemary Lindsay's Polka, a rôle she has not danced for some time but in which she is still funnier, nicer and more stylish than any of her successors.

The programme also included *Pineapple Poll* with Desmond Doyle as Captain Belaye. More relaxed than at his London début, a few days earlier, he had all the swaggering elegance the part needs.

His acting is good, his dancing is better, and his honest, manly personality is well suited to the ballet. When he has had the chance to develop a few more individual touches, he should be first-rate in the part.

Also new in *Poll,* so far as Londoners are concerned, was Sheila Humphreys as Mrs. Dimple. Young dancers playing old women usually look exactly what they are, but this was an exception. She included a lot of funny business without being overfussy, and brought far more life to the rôle than it has had with this company recently. **John Percival.**

Anderton moves up

ALTHOUGH Elizabeth Anderton has been rising steadily up the Royal Ballet hierarchy for about a year, she has danced comparatively few leading rôles at Covent Garden. It was consequently of particular interest on August 20, when she danced Swanilda in *Coppélia* for the first time in central London. The thing that strikes one about Anderton is the intelligence of her interpretations and her Swanilda is no exception. When I first saw her dance it at the end of last year in Woolwich, I was much impressed by the witty resourcefulness of her first two acts, but less happy about her dancing in the final *divertissement.* Perhaps surprisingly there now seems little else to add, for it remains a convincing characterisation that falls short of much classical style. Her make-up in this, and indeed generally throughout the season, was very bad indeed, with far too much lipstick and eye make-up which almost reduced her eyes to black sockets. She is a pretty girl, but her make-up had an ageing and hardening effect.

Henry Legerton repeated his delightful Dr. Coppélius, which has now developed into one of the best in Royal Ballet annals, his inter-play with Anderton in the second act being especially amusing and even lovable. Donald Britton's assertive Franz is another well-conceived character study. Although his dancing was not at his own best level — considering the amount of work he had to do during this fortnight's season this was not surprising — he partnered sturdily, and at one point prevented Anderton from coming a singularly unpleasant cropper. Lynn Seymour took a lyrical view of the Dawn variation, which was agreeably unusual, while Carole Needham danced promisingly as Prayer without giving evidence of any strong personality.

Anderton also appeared in Margaret Hill's old rôle in *Solitaire,* which made a welcome revival at Covent Garden on August 18. It was a pity, although perhaps inevitable, that this revival utilised the main company's version of the décor (inferior to the original) and set against it the second company costumes. The results were hardly what Desmond Heeley intended, and anyway looked a mess. The work had obviously been well rehearsed, but it was most unfortunate that all the boys were of such vastly differing sizes, which gave the *ensemble* work a curious appearance.

Elizabeth Anderton has greatly improved as the young girl, having shed most of her former hardness, and replaced it with a sweet if nonetheless calculated charm. It was good to see Maryon Lane back as the Polka-Dot Girl; no one except the elegant Sara Neil who created the rôle has surpassed Lane in this. Britton, equally unbeatable in his own part, was his usual insouciant self. Desmond Doyle was attractively self-effacing in the *pas de deux,* and the former Boulton rôle was danced with remarkable vigour by Christopher Gable. This young man, known more by his classroom repute than his stage appearances, is evidently a dancer of very great promise indeed. So far his career has been dogged by injury, but with his pleasant manner, apparently brilliant technique and strong partnering, he should develop into a dancer to reckon with. **C. B.**

Seymour steps in

ON the afternoon of August 20, Lynn Seymour took over the leading rôle in *Solitaire* for the first time at Covent Garden. With her beautiful sense of timing, and an under-stated, mischievous humour, she was remarkably good in a rôle that at first blush one would not have associated with her. With its fine dancing, including some lovely, airy jumps, and with its whimsicality stopping just short of whimsy, this was, to my mind, unquestionably the best-all-round performance the rôle has had since Margaret Hill. In one respect, but only one, it even surpassed Hill; it was more childlike. This performance also saw Terry Westmoreland taking over Britton's part. He danced capably, although with a slight sense of strain that detracted from his portrayal.

The last night of this brief season (August 27) was given over to Lynn Seymour's Odette-Odile, and she produced what was very probably her best performance of the dual rôle so far. The contrast between her warm and tender Odette and softly dazzling Odile is now becoming more marked, yet she has not lost the sense of keeping them essentially as companion portraits. Her *pas de deux* work seemed technically stronger than before, although she needs to improve Odette's variation in the second act — her concluding *chainé* turns here were particularly weak. Her *fouettés* in the *Black Swan coda* have improved, but are still not good enough. Soon people will be advising her to cut them out. This, I think, would be a grave mistake. There is no step in classical vocabulary that both musically and dramatically (not to mention historically) is as *right* here as the *fouetté,* and any young dancer faced with difficulties here would be well advised to persevere and, as they say at the grocer's, "to accept no substitute".

Desmond Doyle, who has frequently danced Prince Siegfried on tour, was making his début in the rôle at Covent Garden. His mime had authority but was just a shade too stiff and unbending. His partnering, on the other hand, was first rate, and his dancing — especially his fine *grand jétes* in the *coda* of the *Black Swan* — possessed ease and *brio.* Doyle has improved immensely during his sojourn with the second company, and now makes a valuable recruit to the Royal Ballet's ranks of *premier danseurs.*

The rest of the second company in this *Swan Lake* were not, to be honest, quite up to full Covent Garden standard. However, there was a lively if somewhat untidy *pas de six* from Valerie Taylor, Helen Starr Joan Blakeney Christopher Gable, Ian Hamilton and Alan Beale. Both Elizabeth Anderton and Audrey Farriss contributed good performances in the *pas de trois,* and the incredibly versatile Donald Britton, again with Farriss, made a boisterous Neapolitan couple. Some of the character dancing, both in this and *Coppélia,* offered promise for the future. **C. B.**

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET at the Royal Festival Hall

LONDON'S Festival Ballet opened its ninth season at the Royal Festival Hall on July 19, when the evening's highlight (if that is the word) was provided by the London prémiere of Lifar's *Bonaparte à Nice (1796),* which was fully reviewed in our last issue. The evening had opened with a passable performance of *Les Sylphides.* Belinda Wright produced some nice jumps and a suitable air of fragility in the *Mazurka* and *Pas de Deux,* even though there was something of a soubrette nuance to her gossamer lightness. Ben Stevenson had much of the right enraptured air, but his actual dancing disappointed, while Jeannette Minty was a shade too sprightly, rather than spritely, in the Waltz. Pamela Hart succeeded in making little or nothing of the *Prélude.* She is perhaps not a Fokine dancer.

Dr. Julian Braunsweg, the company's Director-General, is a strong advocate of the necessity to "send the audience 'ome 'appy!" Lichine's *Graduation Ball,* which closed the first night, is not a bad example of the "'ome-'appy" school of choreography and to my mind it is far and away Lichine's best work. It is hardly a sophisticated ballet, and the Festival company underline this fact with slapstick gusto.

Vassilie Trunoff brings ample vigour, but

perhaps too much maturity to the rôle of the Junior Cadet. Anita Landa dances strongly as the Mistress of Ceremonies, and Diane Westerman is pert as the pig-tail girl who does that very calculated "Impromptu" dance. On the first night Michael Hogan was comfortably below the adequate as the Drummer. (Hands up, all who remember Orloff!) The production as a whole would, I feel, be greatly improved by a general toning down. Then it might send the audience 'ome contented as well as 'appy.

The first of the company's guest artists were Olga Ferri, an Argentinian ballerina from the Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires, and Vladimir Skouratoff, who needs no introduction to London. When I saw them dancing in *Swan Lake* Act 2 I was not unduly impressed with Ferri, who showed all the looks of a ballerina, possesses an adequate technique, but was generally a rather dull Odette. There was a certain skimpiness about her movements, which lacked flow and musicality, while her characterisation was so discreet as to be hardly noticeable. She was not helped by a most ill-fitting *tutu*, although Skouratoff, looking as valiant as ever, supported her nobly.

Swan Lake Act 2 was the chosen vehicle for the Western début of the company's two Hungarian guest artists. Gabriella Lakatos and her partner Ferenc Havas, both from the Budapest State Opera. This performance, on August 25, showed a curious compromise between Eastern and Western styles. Lakatos immediately revealed herself as a full-blown, almost over-blown, dancer, with an obvious sympathy for music but with a fondness for an over-ornate style of dancing. Ferenc Havas, the better of the two, has a likeable personality and a refreshing absence of mannerisms. There was a down-to-earth virility about this Siegfried, which if not particularly princely was at least attractive in its large-scale, no-nonsense fashion.

On the same night Lakatos and Havas appeared in the *Black Swan pas de deux* (thus giving us a sort of digest version of the full-length ballet) and it was possible to make a further assessment of their work. Lakatos turned very well, but she is a dancer with a load of mannerisms, and would not I think be regarded worthy of ballerina ranking in the West — or for that matter in Russia. This was satellite rather than Bolshoi style, although she certainly has a "Russian" feeling for the dance. This with the discipline of good teaching could possibly turn her into a more interesting dancer.

Havas danced with a somewhat uncouth skill. His jumps were exceptional, and he combined elevation with a *ballon* remarkable in such a large man. His partnering was of Bolshoi potentiality, if not capability, and his manner, as ever, proved self-effacingly attractive.

The way in which *The Witch Boy* holds its place in the Festival Ballet repertory is eloquent testimony to the fact that it is cheaper to do good ballets than bad ballets.

Where the ballet scores, and it scores heavily, is in terms of sheer dramatic impact; there is a red-blooded quality here, that is all too rare in British ballet. The work also provides John Gilpin with the best modern rôle of his career, as the mysterious Witch Boy who lures Barbara Allen (of Smokey Mountain ballad fame) to her death. This season I was unlucky in not seeing Gilpin dance this part, as every time I saw the ballet it had Ronald Emblen as the Witch Boy. Emblen gives a most remarkable, and most intelligent portrayal. He replaces Gilpin's subtly evil beauty with an animal vitality and a fierce intensity. Dancing extremely well, he produces a characterisation that in its way can be compared with Gilpin's, but it is not nearly so well fitted to the demands of the ballet, or to the choreography. In a sense Emblen is miscast, although I have rarely seen a miscast dancer cope so brilliantly with his inherent disadvantages.

Belinda Wright has, also this season, assumed the rôle of Barbara Allen, which she does extremely well, giving the part plenty of dramatic power with none of the histrionic grimaces that have detracted from some of her work during the season. This portrayal, taken over at short notice, was every bit as good as Anita Landa's creation — which is high praise. What is equally interesting about *The Witch Boy* is the splendid performance the whole ballet receives from the company. **C. B.**

Spectre de la Rose

FOKINE has put a signature of incontrovertible authority on *Spectre de la Rose*, and it is just as well for Festival Ballet's current production is hardly roses all the way. In fact, it is not produced at all. The lighting is bright and flat, and the set which should represent a young girl's bedroom is cheese-pared away in the most shoddy fashion. Just a chair, an enormous urn of vermilion roses made of the best plastic, two flimsy windows, and much crinkled pale material. It looked like a shop window about to be dressed and we were all astonished when Belinda Wright entered instead of willowy young men swathing themselves in dress lengths. She no longer wears a little cape, and the pretty ball dress which is ankle length in the original Bakst is now just below knee-level — changes scarcely warranted by the strenuous choreography. Neither is the r costume what it was. Diaghilev insisted t it be shaded from pink to purple. Gilp current costume is not only low in pet but it is so low in cut that a great trian of deeply bronzed skin is displayed.

The dancing, however, was extrem satisfying, even though many of its circu patterns had to be squashed down i long ellipses because of the stage's w width. It is again fortunate that Fok made the young girl's choreography modest and simple: had it been m elaborate, the work would certainly h degenerated into just another flashy con piece. Both Belinda Wright and John Gil are on very secure ground in this w which they must have danced together the first time close on fifteen years a They understand it, they dance it with t appreciation, and they have managed retain many of its details; details wh could easily have been forgotten or m heavily theatrical. Coming out of an *attit en tournant*, Gilpin's arm spirals upwa to throw a kiss with palm upstretch while Wright, who *bourrées* to the plainn strains of the waltz supported by Spectre, manages to suggest that she is da ing with him in her dream. The chor graphy for the Rose may be simple composition, but it is not easy to exec Gilpin danced it softly and with appropri sensuous and voluptuous overtones, m of his *arabesques* were heroic, his o fault being that his breathing became pleasantly audible in the final moments **E. C. M**

Concerti

I'D always thought Lichine had inten *Concerti* to be an exercise in the abstr pure dance form. While he never revea any fantastic musicality in that he been much guided or inspired by eit

A VISITOR FROM THE ARGENTINE: Olga Ferri, in Swan Lake *Act 2, who is ballerina of the Colon Opera House, Buenos Aires. She is a guest with London Festival Ballet.* *Photo: Mike Davi*

concerto, at least the principals danced it in an appropriately negative, near blank-faced, style. Marilyn Burr and Jean-Pierre Alban still dance the Marcello half in a vaguely pleasant arid style. Belinda Wright and Ben Stevenson, on the other hand, have done wonders with the Vivaldi section, having spared no pains to add much ogling and leering, heavy breathing, and some flamboyantly passionate *ports de bras*. Perhaps Lichine would consider these subterfuges an improvement.

The *corps de ballet* is shown at its worst by the choreography, and some of the groupings would look messy even if danced with precision. Nevertheless, I cannot see why so many different styles of plain walking need be featured. Some girls edge in on *demi-pointe*, while an unhealthy proportion waddle on in the most finicky affected manner, and, one or two, fantastic as it sounds, make surly faces. Gaye Fulton has a pleasant appearance and a cleanness of style which makes her an improvement on Pamela Hart in leading the opening *pas de quatre*. Two of the cavaliers look so completely non-classical that one feels that they would possibly be more suitably employed in something like *Irma la douce*.

E. C. M.

Companions to Bourrée

WITH their production of Balanchine's *Bourrée Fantasque* (reviewed in full elsewhere), London's Festival Ballet brought back much of the quality and disciplined exuberance which once established the company on the world's ballet map when Lander's *Etudes* was first mounted some years ago. On the same programme as its first performance — August 18 — there were also two other works, of some years' standing in Festival's repertory, which showed-up the strong and weak seams in the company's make-up. These were Lander's revival of a *divertissement* from Bournonville's *Napoli* and Michael Charnley's *Symphony for Fun*.

There is absolutely no point in reviving the works of Denmark's greatest choreographer of the last century, August Bournonville, unless they are given with the right style and complete understanding of the old French school. Compared to the later Russians — Petipa and Ivanov — Bournonville's steps and *enchaînements* are charming sweet and seem naïve unless they are given with an innate sense of this particular school. Simple as it all looks it is in fact very very difficult indeed to perform, especially by those brought up in the later Russian school after the flashy virtuosity and technical pyrotechnics of the Italian school had so firmly infiltrated into St. Petersburg. As long as Toni Lander was a ballerina with Festival Ballet she could keep an eye on things, and her own performance of the Teresina rôle was so perfect that it could not help but inspire all her fellow artists. Without her, I am afraid this revival seems utterly pointless; a pity, because if well done it could make the most suitable opening work for any programme.

Anita Landa is not new to Teresina, but she seems to dance it with less understanding than when she first gave it several years ago. Now she dances with a rather brassy hardness and the charm sits uneasily on her general interpretation. Little refinements such as the manipulation of the skirt seem to elude her. But the imp of miscasting really got to work on poor Vassilie Trunoff as the groom, Gennaro. He is a boisterous and splendid character dancer such as we rarely see in British companies. Blackamoors, Golden Slaves, Polovtsian Chieftains, Gopak dancers and all the gallery of leaping and bounding sex-pots are for him — the subtle elegance of a Romantic Neapolitan bridegroom, never. He made a bold and seemingly blindfolded shot at the bull's-eye, but he hit a point that was hardly on the target at all. I fail to see why Louis Godfrey, the nearest thing to a Bournonville dancer that Britain ever had, was not dancing this part, nor was he even in the *Pas de Six*.

This particular *Pas de Six* is possibly the best exhibition piece of the whole vocabulary of the Bournonville school, in much the same way as are the Fairies' variations in the Prologue of *The Sleeping Beauty* of the Russian school. Every dancer has to be perfectly placed, have clean and immaculate finish, their heads have to be at the right tilt and their arms in the perfect classical position, with the hand of the upraised arm dropped at the correct position above the head. When it is correctly given, as it sometimes is in Copenhagen, it is one of the most beautiful sights in all classical ballet. When it is not, there are no words printable for it. Of Festival's sextet, only Dianne Richards and Ronald Emblen gave any glimmer of what it should be. Ben Stevenson strained too much in his efforts to show us that he could dance; now he has shown us he should temper his performance to the special requirements of this school.

In the Ballabille and Tarantella, Ivan Baptie was noticeable for having got the hang of things, but this only went to show-up the ineptitude of the rest. I have heard street bands in Naples play these jolly lilting tunes with greater feeling and natural zest than Geoffrey Corbett managed to coax out of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, led by Arthur Davison.

But if this was the weak seam then the strong seam, though its strength has varied spectacularly over the years, was revealed in Charnley's *Symphony for Fun*. This was the company's first really successful creation, as opposed to its successful revivals, and although this particular dance idiom now seems almost old-fashioned the company manages to keep it fresh. This in spite of the fact that few of the original cast are still in it. Just as Toni Lander is essential to *Napoli*, so is John Gilpin to this. On this particular evening he gave a performance of the Third Movement that was better than I have ever seen him give. Happily he seemed to be right back to his own top form, a form that appeared rather blunted at the beginning of the company's London season, but then, of course, *Bonaparte à Nice (1796)* was enough to blunt anybody. Throughout this whole movement he gave a display of lithe and poetic bodily control that could be equalled by no other British dancer of today.

Nobody has ever equalled Noël Rossana in the Second Movement, and although Jeannette Minty dances it competently she misses out on the nymphomaniac humour of the girl who tries to get each of the four boys in turn only to find herself left with nothing — that is, until the Fourth Movement when she gets Gilpin.

The great thing about the ballet now is that the rest of the company give it with such gusto and sense of enjoyment. Particularly good is the present crop of boys, who manage to project even more individual personalities than their predecessors.

P. W.

Giselles from far and wide

AS Alicia Markova said, during an interval at Festival Hall, "this is round the world with Giselle". In three nights the company showed us principal dancers from Britain, South America, Russo-France and Hungary — and very interesting it was. It would have been more interesting still had it been possible to see the first act from Britain's entry — Belinda Wright and John Gilpin. But a brilliant move on the part of the company's ticket distributors placed me on the top shelf of Festival Hall, so far away and behind so many long-necked and big-headed ladies, that the performance appeared to be encased in an area somewhat smaller than the traditional postage stamp. Any acting subtleties on the part of the two stars were lost somewhere in the vast reaches of inner space and I can only record that the lines of the *corps de ballet* were extremely ragged and that Wright danced what looked to be a beautiful variation. After a first interval explosion during which time it seemed that several people looked very serious, while others scuttled through doors leading backstage, I was graciously awarded the Director General's seats and managed to see the second act from a sensible position. Belinda Wright has improved immeasurably since I last saw her in this ballet. Her technique is sure and she invests her movements with great poetry. With her hair drawn down over her ears, like a Victorian lithograph, she looked quite lovely and she played with an air of dedication

Apart from Markova, I have seen no British ballerina give this second act with such understanding. In fact her performance gave me one of the most real pleasures that I have had from ballet in several months.

I doubt whether Gilpin has ever considered himself to be a great Albrecht or that it measures up to his other very notable portrayals. Physically he looks too young to be touched by a deep sorrow or even to be the sort of young man who would moon around in woods waiting for the spectre of his beloved. On the other hand he dances so well and his partnering has improved so much that he almost makes up for a defect that is physical rather than artistic. I shall long remember two *attitude* turns as being the most beautiful I have probably ever seen from a male dancer.

As Myrthe, Marilyn Burr *bourréed* cleanly, more cleanly at this performance than on the subsequent night, and covered the stage with nice jumps. Her miming though is too abrupt to be imperious. There should be a slower more deliberate sweep in all the movements of regal ladies who delight in sending people to their doom. From this new seat it was impossible to see if the lines of the *corps* had improved on the first act although they seemed to be more in the mood of the work, but there are a few who, though dancing the steps correctly, do not appear to know why they are doing them.

For the Olga Ferri-Vladimir Skouratoff performance on the following night, my vision was clear all through — perhaps a little too clear for some of the elements. When *Giselle* was first revived by Anton Dolin for the company at the Stoll Theatre ten years ago, it was, apart from that of Ballet Rambert, the most sensitive British production. Seeing that Ballet Rambert appears so infrequently in the capital, it seemed that Festival Ballet were the true guardians of this old classic — as far as London was concerned. In the intervening years we have seen a great number of *Giselles* from abroad and our knowledge of the work has been increased. From the Russians and the Danes we have learnt what a domestic tragedy the first act can really

be when it is fully understood just how every character is related to the other — and how every person on stage should react to what is happening. I don't feel that Festival Ballet have derived much benefit from these valuable lessons because most of what the subsidiary characters do is without point. For instance, Giselle's mother (Anne Rowse) goes through a set of motions that never conveyed any sense of doting motherhood — her behaviour is more that of a maid than anything else. Though I never care for those bewigged Mother Hubbards that we sometimes see, this one went to the other extreme and looked far too young. Then there is the question of Pamela Hart's Bathilde, a perrenial grouse this one, which is the finest example I know of just how utterly meaningless classical mime can be though it could hardly be said that her limited range of hand waving and pretty but empty facial expressions came anywhere into the category of classical mime.

People are not put on the stage just to dress it, they should be there to contribute to the narrative and neither the villagers nor the Duke's retinue showed any marked knowledge, in this fact, that they are quite heavily involved in a drama.

Vassilie Trunoff's Hilarion is by far the most telling of these minor rôles. He has good command of the stage and he looks right though he tends to move around too quickly for a person of the plodding sinister nature that Hilarion was obviously intended to be.

Olga Ferri is a ballerina from the Colon Opera House in Buenos Aires and both physically and in her interpretation of the Giselle rôle she strongly resembles Alicia Alonso. Her opening moments were overcoy but this may possibly have been due to initial nervousness because it was less noticeable as the act wore on. She has a very nice clean technique and a strong acting ability. Her variation was excellently danced and I very much liked her turns ending in a *penché attitude*. Using a heart-condition as the real reason for her death, a fact that she touched on with no great tiresome emphasis, she was remarkably moving throughout and contrived, as the end became near, to suddenly look old and drained of blood — an effect I have seen in very few performances of this rôle. There were many little touches in her relationship with both her mother and Albrecht that were charming, particularly good being the moment when she just cannot believe that her lover is not quite what she imagined him to be.

If her second act was less good it was danced with an inherent feeling for Romanticism that can only come from aristocratic schooling. I think it is hard for ballerinas to get the full measure of a production they don't know on their first public appearance and I am sorry that it was not possible to see Ferri again in this part as I am certain that on second viewing the faults, anyway minor ones, would have been ironed out.

Vladimir Skouratoff's Albrecht complimented her performance nobly. He seemed to me to be right back to his old form after a few years of bad luck which included knee trouble. He looks and dances like a true Romantic cavalier and his performance was thoroughly convincing. I only wish that he could loosen up a bit around the upper part of his body — a certain tightness around the neck and shoulders rather restricts his performance causing it to lose any feeling of breadth.

But if Ferri was a bit coy in the beginning of her performance, then the Budapest ballerina of the following evening — Gabriella Lakatos — achieved the remarkable feat of being coy throughout the entire ballet. This may be the way that they like things in Hungary but it just makes mincemeat of Giselle's character — both as a human and as a wili. On this occasion had I been a person coming to the ballet for the first time I just would not have had a clue as to what *Giselle* was all about. Lakatos seems to have been influenced by the externals of Soviet ballerina performances without grasping any of the inner meaning. She is a strong dancer, but to make anything of the complexities of this taxing part something more than strength is needed. There were moments — moments when she just posed on the stage without moving — that made no sense in any context. She has an operetta habit of taking the audience into her confidence that I found irritating.

Her arms and the back-bent wrists made it look, sometimes, as though she were appearing in a Soviet *Swan Lake*. So healthy did she appear throughout that I could find no reason for her death; some of her movements in the mad scene were so smooth that she left no impression of a mind crumpled. It is perhaps unjust to thus criticise Festival's guest, and it is of the greatest interest for us to see dancers from every country, but some of us were brought up to the greatest Giselle that this century has yet seen — Olga Spessitzeva — and she formed our yardstick. Many ballerinas have almost equalled her but any considerable falling off from the standard she set is not acceptable if this old ballet is to be kept in any sort of state of preservation.

Lakatos had as her Albrecht a fellow Hungarian — Ferenc Havas. He is tall, handsome, with good legs and a manly figure. He has that bigness of movement so noticeable in many Soviet males. He jumps well, turns well, partners well and uses the stage splendidly when he dances. Unfortunately much of his performance is marred by a provincial hamminess that makes him appear less good than he really is. He is the sort of material that a really good school could turn into a most distinguished dancer.

The only other cast-change in this performance was that Deirdre O'Conaire appeared as Myrthe. After a slightly unsteady start, during which she appeared to be off the music, she settled in to giving a very commendable interpretation of that mid-night royal. Possessing fine elevation and the sort of elongated line that can be so good in English dancers, she showed great promise. It is a pity that somebody like Joyce Graeme cannot come and instil in her those evil powers that make this rôle into more than just a display of good dancing.

Festival Ballet still have the basis of a good *Giselle* production; what they need is to build up on it and cement some of the weak joints. Two things they can put right without any further ado: firstly to paint the ground-rows and grave-rostrum in the second act so that they look as though they had something to do with Hugh Stevenson's original designs.

Secondly, they can also take that Mediterranean blue light out of the interior of Giselle's cottage which made a sudden appearance on the Hungarians' performance When I first saw it I felt it was some sinister omen — and perhaps my initial feeling about it was right at that.

P. W.

TELEVISION

Stars of the Bolshoi Ballet

Given on BBC Television on July 24. 45 mins. Narrator: A. V. Coton. Producer: Margaret Dale.

THE BBC has steadily drawn away from Independent Television in the field of quality ballet entertainment and it has even started to play it rough by making its programmes less elaborate and more economical — a sure sign of ascendancy. And just when we were getting so fond of those old cluttered sets which looked for all the world as if they'd been assembled at the Antique Dealers' Fair! Margaret Dale did not overreach herself this time by overloading the production, which featured no more than pale-toned curtains backing a raised stage, with trick effects. A. V. Coton of *The Daily Telegraph* wore well as narrator. His remarks were explanatory and brief, and one didn't feel that he was taking up precious time which should have been devoted to dancing. He has no irritating mannerisms, makes no precious remarks about art, doesn't wriggle as if on a hot seat, and doesn't peep down as if he may have left vital buttons undone. Seated on a swivel chair, he was obliged to perform half a *pirouette* each time an item finished — from the tip of his ear, back view, he swung into vision with the cameras capturing quite accidentally a split-screen effect.

But in this type of omnibus programme there is always the danger that there will be too many abbreviated items having to hurry to a frenzied climax in a minimum space of time, thus leaving an impression of exuberant stops and starts. Here such dangers were side-stepped by the inclusion of more lyrical items, such as the *Melody* (Glück) and *The Little Hump-Backed Horse,* with Karelskaya doing her best to give a melting solo in the repetitive choreography.

The programme certainly jumped the barrier which is said to separate highbrow features from mass appeal fare. Many of the glaring visual defects as seen at the Albert Hall were toned down: with the absence of colour the silly costumes disfigured the dances less. Moreover, a limited range of angles was used, for with only one *ensemble* item — the *Polonaise* and *Cracovienne* — there was scarcely any need for complicated shots to show floor designs.

Probably the most exciting item, and this could be predicted, was the *Don Quixote pas de deux* for Timofeyeva and Khokhlov, though here the former nearly gyrated herself into invisibility. I'm not implying that she did anything so shocking as travel in her *fouettés* and that the cameras couldn't track her quickly enough. Alas, the background was so dazzling bright for lightly toned costumes that she looked like a spinning shadow.

A Soldier's Tale

STRAVINSKY'S *A Soldier's Tale,* as produced on the BBC Channel on August 14 by Charles Rogers, was an astonishing feat of direction in its integration of dance, acting and orchestra. Hazel Merry was an enchanting Princess, very much at ease in her softly phrased movements, while Job Stewart managed to partner her and actually danced with considerable skill for an actor. Elizabeth West's choreography was generally appropriate, though it seemed to be struggling far too hard to get away from orthodox classical movements.

E. C. M.

Dance and Dancers . . . . IN FRANCE

THE PARIS OPERA

Pas de Dieux

First performed at the Paris Opéra on July 6, 1960. Ballet in three movements by Gene Kelly to Gershwin's Concerto in F. **Choreography and production: Gene Kelly. Décors and costumes by André François.**

Aphrodite ..... CLAUDE BESSY
Zeus ..... ATTILIO LABIS
Eros ..... MICHEL DESCOMBEY
with LUCIEN DUTHOIT, Mlle. MONS, M. FRANK
and *corps de ballet*

FOLLOWING Claude Bessy's efforts, jazz and modern dance, which were first seen last winter at the Opéra-Comique, now make their débuts at the Opéra. This agreeable intermediary seems to have provided a great diversion not only for the company, but for the general public, who are less likely to purse their lips at this rupture of policy than the regular audience at the Opéra. Despite a certain wavering as to whether this type of ballet is too shocking for France's foremost theatre, it has been exceptionally warmly received. Is this a fortunate conspiracy of circumstances, due to the proximity of holidays, or the feeling of relaxation inherent in the work of Gene Kelly? At any rate, in this context one can hardly forget the chilly reception received by Cranko's *La Belle Hélène* (1955), certainly an uneven work, but one containing brilliant passages and a much higher level of inspiration than this ballet, which happens to be on a similar theme. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the applause and reservations aroused by this holiday entertainment.

First, one must congratulate Kelly for his choice of Gershwin's *Concerto in F*; it is an attractive score, classical in its form but modern in its inspiration and instrumentation, and always original despite its varied influences. The orchestra, however, under the assured baton of Richard Blareau, must acquire more warmth for this work which is so outside the usual repertoire.

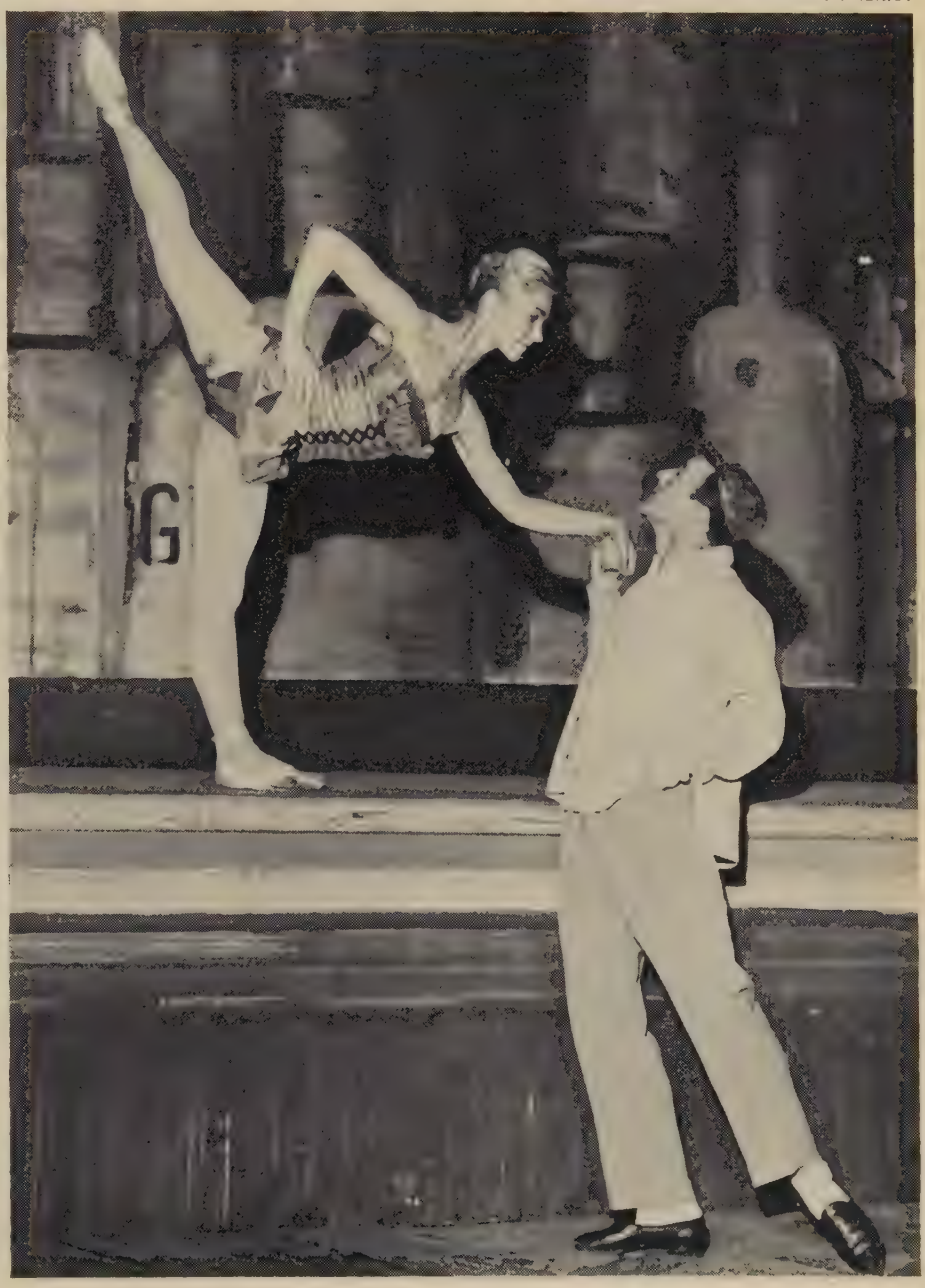
Since the parodies of the popular theatre of the 18th-century, and, above all, the fantasies of Meilhac, Halévy and Offenbach, mythological themes have remained popular. Gene Kelly is therefore drawing on an established tradition. But even fantasy has its rules, so why this arbitrary union of Zeus and Aphrodite, and the relinquishment of Mars? This may be only a point of detail for the plot is no more than a slender thread provided to support the tableaux and scenes of the choreographer's imagination — the earthbound adventures of a far too fleshly goddess.

The choreography and production are so closely interwoven that it becomes hard to decide to which source to attribute certain effects. Taken all in all, though, Gene Kelly proves himself to be more a man of the cinema than of the theatre or a choreographer, and is it not to the cinema that he owes his reputation? The ballet is composed of short scenes of ideas rather than plot in the stricter sense. The ideas are brilliant, but the continuity is poor. Certainly there are some amusing passages: for example, the entrance of the *corps de ballet* in two parallel lines, each hidden in turn by curtains falling one after the other, and the evolutions of two lovers who are bound together by long ribbons — a device which calls to mind the interesting work of Janine Charrat. The clash between the bandits is well directed, and the gags hit home, despite a certain vulgarity, particularly in the bed-chamber scene. Moreover, the costumes, though not very original, are suitable. But this is all a far cry from the wit of Roland Petit or the boundless verve of Jerome Robbins, and here one can only regret that on this occasion the latter was not substituted for Gene Kelly.

The company is material of rare quality for any choreographer. Here Mr. Kelly frankly amuses himself. The dancers, trained in the rigid mould of the classical school, break out joyfully and bring to his modern steps a discipline developed through a rigorous training. Anyway, so long as this experiment remains an exception, it cannot prove dangerous to the Opéra's reputation. Among the soloists, the men are outstanding — Attilio Labis, a boyish and wayward Zeus, dances with *brio* and supple strength, while the easy assurance of Lucien Duthoit, Michel Descombey and the young M. Frank is only rivalled by the charm of Mlle Mons. On her side, Claude Bessy brings the best of her American experience to her undoubted charms. She is doubtless too expansive and forgetful of the fact that effusiveness is hardly an ideal approach for the Opéra, but such a failing is probably inevitable in a work of such a hybrid style.

Although the colourful costumes are the work of André François (the distinguished cartoonist), the influence as shown in the general effects is obviously that of the pro-

KELLY AT THE OPERA : Gene Kelly rehearses Claude Bessy, who plays the rôle of Aphrodite in Pas de Dieux, *which was Kelly's first creation for the Paris Opéra.*
Photo : Lido.



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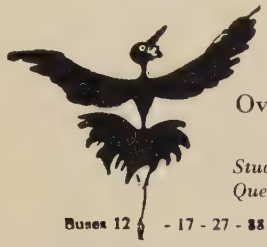

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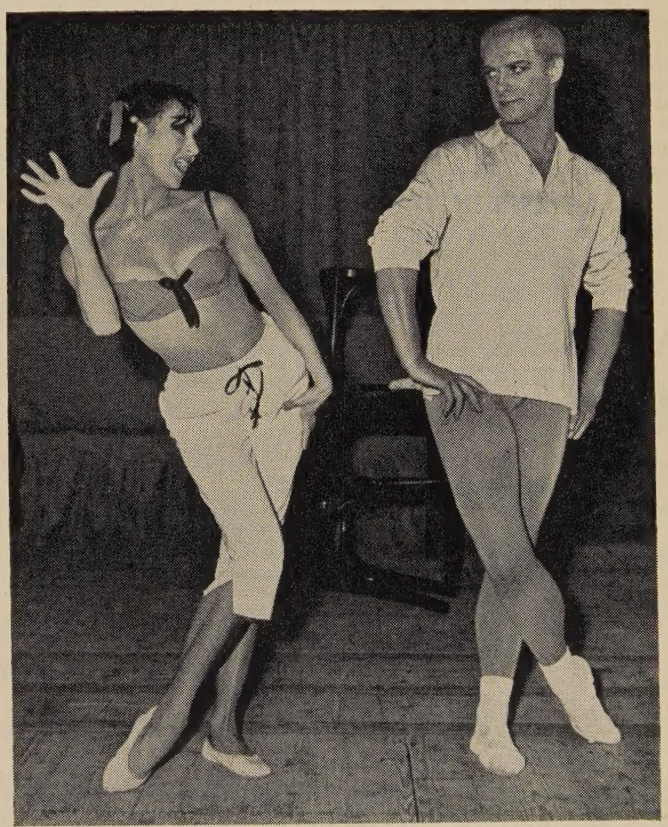
er and film director. There are also ain gimmicks — backcloths which fade to show a change of scene, and the of balloons. But, alas, the effects can- always be obtained quickly enough, and s the essential rhythm is impaired. In a the montage would iron out these hes, but on stage any slowing down is n to criticism. The sprawling quality of work, therefore, must be eliminated if s to remain in the repertoire.

N the same evening Claire Motte scored a triumph in *Les Sylphides*, ugh it was a surprise to find her sup- ting Marjorie Tallchief and George bine, who are so much less suited to work than Yvette Chauviré and Peter n Dijk, the outstanding romantic dancers France today. Both are in France at the ment and, incidentally, by some strange nce hardly employed at all this month. Another cause of astonishment is that on evening of his new creation, Gene Kelly s accorded the Legion of Honour. This so parsimoniously distributed to artists the dance, and there are many out- nding dancers and choreographers, both m France and outside, who have not received it. On the other hand, it was happy decision to appoint Attilio Labis *nseur étoile*: the nomination of Claire tte should now follow without delay.

INDRANI

HE last dance programme of the Théâtre des Nation's season was provided by lia. But on this occasion Indrani's pro- mme, which started on June 21, showed e of the purest facets of this art. Her ther, the famous dancer Ragini Devi, was author of the first book on Hindu dance itten in English, under the title of *ityanjali*. Indrani, who was born in adras, studied the Bharata-Natyam, and has just brought to Paris three styles herto unknown outside India — the

CREATIONS AT ENGHIEN: For this year's festival at Enghien, on the outskirts of Paris, there were three new works. Above, Christian Uboldi's L'Attente *with Sulich, Nogaret, Dragadze and Meyer. Below left, Milko Sparemblek's* Héros et son Miroir *with Miskovitch, Sifnios and Sulich. Below right, George Reich's* Cherche Partenaire *with Sifnios and Miskovitch.* *Photos: Lido.*



Orissi and the Chau styles, which are still performed in the temples of Orissa, and the Kouchipoudi, which is the classical dance of Andhra.

These dance forms owe their inspiration to legends. Indrani and her musicians and dancers bring us into direct contact with them, for, until now, they have only been glimpsed by us in temple carvings, frescoes and miniatures. One by one, Vishnu, Radha and Shiva, the Demon Kings Ravana and Hiranya, and the goddess Dourga are personified. Frequent use is made of the established mudras, and the ritual dances alternate with picturesque interludes, such as combats, the entrance of the story-teller and the jesters. While the feet mark the patterns, the supple, tendril-like arms carry the hands as though they are flowers, but flowers which have an untiring capacity for story-telling. The iridescent and sumptuous costumes always retain a perfect harmony and warmth of colour, while the solo percussion shows Krishna Pillai's astonishing virtuosity to full advantage.

ENGHIEN LES BAINS

AS in preceding years, the Casino d'Enghien reserved two evenings — June 16 and 18 — for gala ballet programmes. This time it was under the artistic direction of Irene Lidova. *L'Attente,* created by Christian Uboldi, made little impression and merely repeated well-worn formulae, despite the sympathetic performances of Yvonne Meyer, Nicole Nogaret, Vassili Sulich and Ivan Dragadze. Milko Sparemblek's *Héros et son miroir* was more interesting, but failed to equal this young choreographer's previous works mainly because there was a lack of lucidity in its dramatic development. Milorad Miskovitch brought dignity to his rôle of the ageing hero, of whom Vassili Sulich interprets his attractive reflection. Dusanka Sifnios appeared in it as the unfaithful wife in the dream sequence, and later danced with Miskovitch and Yvonne Meyer in a light, modern dance rôle in George Reich's agreeable piece of trivia, *Cherche partenaire,* to music by Betti and décors by Levasseur. Liane Daydé and Michel Renault performed two *pas de deux* — the first, the "Black Swan", lacked discipline; the second, a rather brief one by Chabukiani, entitled *Passionnément,* to Schumann music, seemed rather feeble choreography.

NEWS IN BRIEF

IN the revival at the Opéra of *Samson et Delilah,* Claire Motte and Attilio Labis danced in the *divertissement* produced by Léone Mail and George Skibine.

AT the reception for the Conseil général de la Seine, the ballet company of the Opéra danced *Les Sylphides, Idylle* and *Palais de cristal* on the stage in the Parc de Sceaux.

THE Théâtre de l'Etoile held a Spanish festival on June 24, which brought together the guitarist, José Motos, the dancers, Milagros, Mari Antonia and Los Sacromontes, and the singers, Marina Montes and Los Mensajeros from Paraguay.

Marie-Françoise Christout.

NEW RECORDS

Continued from page 21

Ballet's production, calls for violin playing of the highest technical accomplishment. Menuhin plays the two Aurora *variations* with the utmost sensitivity, but he unaccountably does not essay the *Entr'acte,* which I think a waste of a golden opportunity.

Kurtz's conducting shows all his accustomed mastery of the idiom, though — unusual for him — some of the tempi do not accord with the demands of Petipa's choreography, the *Intrada* of the Fairies' *Pas de Six* and the *Rose Adagio,* in particular, being taken too slowly. Yet even here one admires the *cantabile* warmth and expansive breadth of the phrasing, and the gorgeous tonal sheen on the playing. The recording is suitably sumptuous.

BALLET IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Continued from page 17

As the prince in *Swan Lake* he is tender in his feelings for Odette and despairing over his unintentional betrayal of her. He is fearless to the point of self-sacrifice in his struggle with Rothbart, where, in the Prague production, the love of Odette and the prince overcomes the spell of the wicked wizard and the ballet ends happily. His Vaclav, the Polish noble, in *Bakhchisaray Fountain,* has a true elegance. In Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* he has danced both Mercutio and Romeo, and people like to attend each of the two performances in order to see him in such different rôles. The death of Mercutio is an amazing solo in mime, every movement and gesture of the dancer being explicit. Different again are his rôles as Albrecht in *Giselle,* Philippe in *The Flames of Paris,* and Kozakov in *Gayne.* Miroslav Kura has also shown talent as a choreographer.

A wide creative register characterises one of the solo dancers at the National Theatre in Prague and a promising choreographer, Vlastimil Jílek. He has mastered with mature classical technique the rôles of Romeo and of the prince in another Prokofiev ballet, *Cinderella.* He has, in addition, a fine sense of humour and a talent for the grotesque. His jester in *Swan Lake* is as enjoyable a vignette as his sailor in Gliere's *Red Poppy.* Entirely different, his Rothbart in *Swan Lake* darts and writhes like a serpent.

Zora Semberová, soloist at the National Theatre in Prague, has concentrated on character rôles. She accompanies herself with virtuosity on the castanets in her Spanish dance. Her tarantella has an Italian lightness and her mazurka a Polish dash. She won her place in the public's heart with her electrifying performance in the title rôle of the ballet-ballad *Viktorka,* as the young girl who goes mad. Her partner, the demonic seducer of Viktorka, was Oldrich Stodola, a National Theatre soloist and noteworthy actor-dancer whose great success has been the rôle of Tybalt in Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet.* A similar kind of dancer is Rudolf Karhánek from Brno, whose best rôles are that of Khan Girei in *Bakhchisaray Fountain* and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet.* In Brno, the delicate and tender Juliet is danced by Vera Wagnerová.

The Bratislava ballet company can also boast several fine artists. There is the young Jarmila Mansingerová, who dances a convincing Odette in *Swan Lake,* the Gypsy Shari in *The Kerchief* by Kenessey, and Maria in *Bakhchisaray Fountain.* Gusta Starostová is another excellent Odette, while in *Romeo and Juliet,* Tybalt has been interestingly portrayed by the talented Ján Mnackov. Every theatre, in fact, possesses some good dancers, and the audiences are ready and able to spot and encourage them even in the provincial towns, be it Elvíra Nemecková in Plzen, Vlasta Pavelcová and Albert Janícek in Ostrava, or Thomás Ivan in Kosice.

If we consider the average scope of the ballet repertoires — theatres in Czechoslovakia have produced 200 ballet programmes during the past ten years — and if we further consider the smallness of companies and the widely different story characters involved, we see that the majority of dancers must each fill very different roles and that considerable demands are made on them.

Ballet in Czechoslovakia is going through a period of change and growth. It looks back with respect upon the great accomplishments of the past throughout the world. It seeks to learn from those in ballet who have gone ahead. Above all it now aims at its own, national creation which will enable it ultimately to give the Czech and Slovak peoples at home, and other peoples abroad, something distinctive in the art of dance and dancers.

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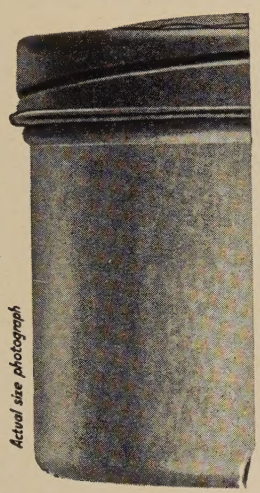

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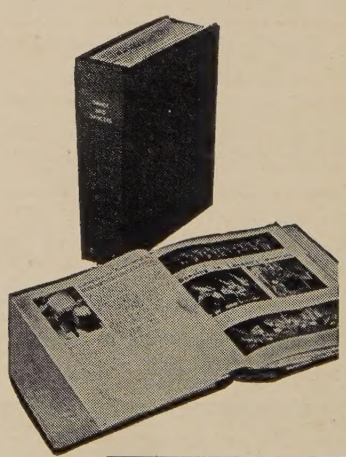

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